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CULTURAL CONFLICT AND ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN NATIVE AMERICAN FICTION :  
MOMADAY'S HOUSE MADE OF DAWN  
WELCH'S WINTER IN THE BLOOD  
AND SILKO'S CEREMONY

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By  
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*to the*

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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JULY 1983

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis "Cultural Conflict and Ethnic Consciousness in Native American Fiction: Momaday's House Made of Dawn, Welch's Winter in the Blood and Silko's Ceremony" submitted by Sanjeev Sharma in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, I.I.T. Kanpur, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. The results embodied in the thesis have not been submitted to any other Univeristy or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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This is to certify that Mr. Sanjeev Sharma has satisfactorily completed all the course requirement for the Ph.D. programme in English. The courses include:

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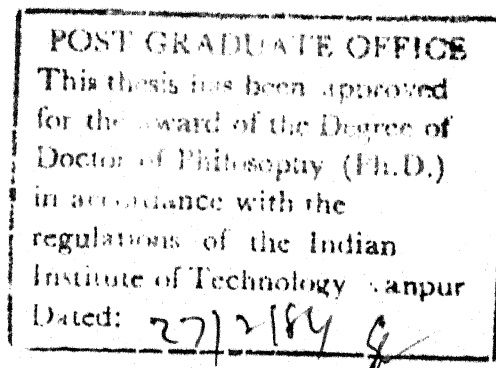
Mr. Sanjeev Sharma was admitted to the candidacy of the Ph.D. degree in April 1980 after he successfully completed the written and oral qualifying examinations.

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## SYNOPSIS

CULTURAL CONFLICT AND ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN NATIVE  
AMERICAN FICTION: MOMADAY'S HOUSE MADE OF DAWN,  
WELCH'S WINTER IN THE BLOOD AND SILKO'S CEREMONY

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The minorities in the United States of America have become conscious of their ethnic heritage and unique identity, and are largely responsible for changing the traditional 'melting pot' notion of American society into one of 'cultural pluralism.' It is in this context that our dissertation analyzes the cultural conflict and ethnic consciousness as expressed in three representative novels by noted post-war Native American writers.

The introduction in Chapter I reveals that the immigrant literature of the last century in the United States is a forerunner of the early ethnic literature of the country. As seen through their writings, the various minorities which had settled in America first sought to shed their identities and assimilate into the American mainstream. Following their failure to resist the white incursions into their territory and community life, the Indians came round to accept the white rule. In the first half of the century, the Native Americans sought assimilation through acculturation, as revealed in the writings related to this period.

However, there has been a distinct change in the Native American's attitude towards the dominant white culture in the period following the Second World War. In order to study the effects of cultural contact and conflict in the fiction of the Native Americans in the post-war period, we have selected House Made of Dawn by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), Winter in the Blood by James Welch (Blackfeet-Gros Ventre) and Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo). By close textual analyses of the three novels in Chapters II, III and IV, we have examined the dilemma of the people caught between two cultures, belonging to neither. Beginning with the individual's malady—his loneliness and estrangement from self and community—we trace the tenuous link that exists between the individual and the community and establish that the "sickness" of the individual represents that of the community. The delicate link between the Indian and his environment has been weakened due to cultural contact, and, in order to strengthen it, the protagonists set forth on a symbolic journey. In the course of their journey, they become aware of their ethnic heritage as it reveals and manifests itself in and through the tribal histories, legends, myths, traditions, rituals, ceremonies and cures.

In Chapter V, we sum up the significant points that have emerged from our analyses of the novels selected for study. The authors of the three novels forcefully drive home the point that the Indians, aware and proud of their ethnic identity, are very much alive and are not a vanishing tribe, as is so often believed. They present an insider's perspective into the psyche of the Indians and the ethos of the Indian experience during

the war and the post-war periods. They also offer an alternative world view which is in sharp contrast to the scientific and the rational world view of the white America, the cause of much of their conflict and suffering. By their distinctive contributions, the Native American writers have immensely enriched American literature.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

. . . In my mind  
I saw your spiders weaving threads  
to bandage up the day. And more  
those webs were filled with words  
that tumbled meaning into wind.

- "Snow Country Weavers"  
James Welch

"The hostility of those who have power  
towards those who can be called inferior  
because they are different because they  
are others, the strangers—has been a  
historical constant. Indeed at times  
it seems to be the dominant theme in  
human history."

- Lewis Hanke in "Indians  
and Spaniards in the  
New World: A Personal View



## INTRODUCTION

In his general survey of Black literature, Nathan A. Scott Jr. remarks: "The decidedly ethnic and regional configuration of the American literary scene over the past generation is frequently remarked, and it is surely a primary fact of our cultural life."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, both in richness and scope American literature has expanded enormously to accommodate the diverse literatures of its minorities. This trend began towards the end of the last century when a new area of interest appeared on the literary front. It was termed "immigrant literature." Today's multi-ethnic literature of the United States is, in fact, an offshoot and an extension of the immigrant literature.

When studied from a multi-cultural perspective, literature, according to Professor Wayne Charles Miller, has the capacity to become "an element in the creation of that [cultural] consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Ethnic literature thus becomes a reflection of the changes and turmoils taking place in the American society. This ethnic emergence is a direct offshoot of the American cultural ethos. Sociologists have assigned various names to this pattern of ethnicity, viz. "cultural pluralism," "cultural relativism," "cultural mosaic," to name only a few. And for better or worse ethnicity<sup>3</sup> has come to be an integral part of American cultural, social and political life.

In this section we intend to trace the emergence of ethnic literature in America and show that the immigrant literature is a forerunner of the contemporary ethnic literature. This will enable us to see the Native American literature in a proper perspective.

Immigrant literature, which began in the last decades of the 19th century, was only a minor force in American literature. Preceding it was the era of the American transcendentalists - Hawthorne, Thoreau, Melville, Emerson and Whitman - who were, in a sense, occupied with the concept of a multi-cultural perspective. Professor Miller traces the growth of a multi-cultural perspective in the writings of these transcendentalists as he very insightfully cites examples from The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance, Typee, Omoo, White Jacket, Moby Dick and Walden to "analyse, to interpret, and to record the ways in which various cultural consciousnesses have emerged and continued to emerge, some quite recently, and how they entangle and interface in our young and still developing multi-faceted society."<sup>4</sup> Following this, the immigrant voices started to articulate their ideas from their own cultural perspectives. America was, then, preoccupied both sociologically and ideologically with developing a composite culture which was termed as the "melting pot" culture. The concept of the melting pot is inherent in the very motto of the U.S. which proudly proclaims: "e pluribus unum" - out of many one. Thus, the melting pot theory demanded a cultural blending in the same social cauldron, involving a mixing of both primary and secondary groups to produce a new

culture based on the precepts of such ideals as liberty, equality, and tolerance for all in America.<sup>5</sup> If on the one hand it was the political ideal, it was on the other a part of a larger whole - the American Dream.

Towing this line of thought were, apart from sociologists, a host of minor writers belonging to various immigrant groups, producing literatures in English or native languages, and voicing the need for an eclectic vision of society. In his informative essay on the immigrant literature, Carl Wittke lists a number of writers and immigrant groups who were active in this field.<sup>6</sup> The chief groups among them were the Pennsylvanian-Dutch; the Swedish-American; the Irish-American; the Norwegian-American; the Jewish-American, and the Italian-American.

There were writers in these groups who felt their ancient heritage and the pull of the land deep inside them. Writers like Skulda Banér, Ole Edvant Kølvaag, Elmer Peterson, George Schock and Hjalmer Hjorth Boyesen were some of the major immigrant writers of this period.<sup>7</sup> Their major concerns, were with their fatherlands and its traditions

. . . the problems of cultural minorities; the conflict in the soul of the immigrant who must reject the old world in order to be accepted in the New; the inferiority complexes resulting from artificially forced Americanization; the anxiety and aspiration, unhappiness and sheer confusion that mark the conflicts of the second generation with their immigrant parents.<sup>8</sup>

Such themes were rarely explored by the American writers at that time. However, the tradition was picked up by the ethnic writers, and even today it is carried on by the contemporary

ethnic writers who delineate racial and cultural conflicts and experiences in their writings.

Till the first half of the twentieth century, the distinction between immigrant and ethnic literature tended to overlap. This was because both the groups were essentially sharing a common outlook—assimilation with the core-culture, even if it meant severing links with the past which had its own native charm and vitality. Therefore it is not surprising to notice that the early history of the Native American literature reveals similar tendencies. The point of view that the early Native American writers adopted was basically one of assimilation into the core-culture. While the first Indian novel, Queen of Woods by Chief Simon Pokagon was published in 1899, the most productive years were between 1920 and 1940. John M. Oskison's three major works, Wild Harvest (1925), Black Jack Davy (1926) and Brothers Three (1935) were significant contributions. John Joseph Mathews' Wah'-Kon-Tah (1932) was both a best seller and a book-of-the-month selection. Another famous novel that he wrote was called Sundown (1934). These works are little known now. However, the most well remembered work of this period is D'Arcy McNickle's The Surrounded (1936) which has recently been reprinted by the University of New Mexico Press (1980). Co-Ge-Wa-A (1927) was the only novel written by a woman during this period while West to the Setting Sun (1943) was co-authored by Ethel Brant Monture and Harvey Chalmers.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that the themes of assimilation and cultural loss were a significant part of the immigrant literature,

This also establishes that the immigrant literature is a forerunner of today's ethnic literature, which voices similar sentiments, although anti-assimilation in point of view. Immigrant literature, because of its assimilation bias, was termed "melting pot" literature. Today's ethnic literature, for just the opposite reasons, is termed, like the very society in which it has taken shape, as the "salad bowl," "cultural mosaic," "pluralistic" or simply "multi-ethnic" literature.

This trend strengthens the view that literature does reflect some dominant concepts and ideas which shape society or which preoccupy sensitive minds. As Wittke puts it, "works of art . . . reflect the time, place and kind of society which produced them and the work of the creative artist is in large measure determined by the social milieu and the history of which he is a part."<sup>10</sup> This itself is nothing new, for Wittke is voicing what the French critic Taine said in the same context.<sup>11</sup> It should, however, be kept in mind, especially so with ethnic writings, that we should be careful not to reduce literary works into sordid sociological documents during or after interpretation.

Of late there has been a resurgence of Indian writing with the publication of N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer Prize winning novel House Made of Dawn (1968). Unlike their predecessors, the post-war writers do not stress the need for assimilation. Nor do they, like the Black writers, produce "protest novels."<sup>12</sup> Yet, in their search for identity, and in the awareness of their ethnicity, they share a significant

point of similarity with the Black consciousness. Like the Black writers, they too have

the great advantage of having never believed that collection of myths to which white Americans cling; that their ancestors were all peace loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen, or that Americans are invincible in battle and wise in peace, that Americans have dealt honourably with Mexicans and Indians and all other neighbours or inferiors, that American men are the world's most direct and virile, that American women are pure.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, they reject the ideas of the previous generations and set out to write on the development of their unique identity. The values and sensibilities of these Native Americans have essentially remained untainted by such false and generalized notions about the white man. Of course, there is no denying that there are others too who have succumbed to these modern myths about the whites and, in order to imitate them, have denied to themselves their distinct ethnic personality.

In the early twenties, Indian culture had started to die and the natives were in a serious state after the First World War. Their arts and crafts were on the way out since they could not compete with the mechanized mode of white production. Their children were growing up as acculturated Indians, quite ashamed of their native identities. A sense of alienation was beginning to be felt.

It was John Collier who, having realized the intensity of damage done to the tribal cultures, advocated the cause of their survival and strove for the economic and spiritual

rejuvenation of the natives. In a circular issued in 1934 he stated that "no interference with Indian religious life or expression will hereafter be tolerated. The cultural history of Indians is in all respects to be considered equal to that of any non-Indian group."<sup>14</sup>

During the period 1922-29, the Indians had managed to extract certain concessions out of the American government. They had also thwarted the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) and Montana Power Company's plan for confiscating a power site of the Flat-head tribe. The Santa Fe railroad was not allowed to use the lands of the Walapai tribes unless a fair compensation was paid to the tribes. The natives also succeeded in receiving some technical aid from the government. Historian William Coffer notes that the attitude of the American government in the twentieth century was that of vacillation between reforming and uprooting the Indians; between an "empathetic approach" and an "anti-Indian philosophy."<sup>15</sup> This attitude appears to be true of the American citizens too.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, the natives all over the U.S. began to realize, especially after the Second World War, that survival depended on tribal unification of some sort. As single tribes, weakened due to inter-tribal rivalries, they would be unable to survive among the whites who had all along taken advantage of the absence of unity in them. Therefore, for positive action it was imperative that the Indians realized the need for unity and a Pan-Indian approach. This led to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the Indians.

The American society appears to labour under gross misconceptions and ignorance regarding the life and nature of the Native Americans. This has led to the false stereotyping of the Native American image in the psyche of the average American. Consequently, for most people, the Native Americans are merely "Indians" (irrespective of the geographical inconsistency of the term and the ensuing errors). The stereotyping is further reinforced by the popular mass media which produces works for public consumption. Such works are not only shallow and one-sided, but are also highly racist in their presentation and viewpoint.<sup>17</sup> Literature itself has to accept a large share of the blame for producing numerous books which confirm the image of the Native American as that of the "noble savage," "the wooden Indian," "the lazy, drunken Indian," and last but not the least that the only good Indian is a dead Indian. Thus, these are images which are far from the reality that surrounds them.<sup>18</sup> As Robert L. Berner writes:

. . . a general need for American literature is for realistic fictional treatments of Indian experience and that we are not apt to get them from non-Indian authors. We have plenty of "noble savages" and "red devils" . . . but these are only projections of the fantasies of white writers.<sup>19</sup>

This line of thought is carried further in Professor Michael Dorris' view that these

fictitious societies confirm to the white reader that contact with the Euro-Americans was the most significant event in the forty thousand year history of Native people on this continent. . . . are sociologically dubious and suggest at best an individual, etic (outsider's) perspective — yet they are often mistaken for ex-cathedra pronouncements about "real" Indian



life, and as such re-enforce debilitating stereotypes.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Mick McAllister, commenting on the difference between Indian writers' and white writers' perceptions on the same subject, says:

Poets like Simon Ortiz, Leslie Silko and Peter Blue Cloud offer an intimate and first hand picture of Indian life not to be found in Waters' books; and the novels Winter in the Blood, The Death of Jim Loney, Ceremony, House Made of Dawn, Seven Arrows are more immediately pleasing because of their inner perspective on being Indian.<sup>21</sup>

The preceding discussion indicates the need for an unbiased, authentic and balanced presentation of the Indian life and reality. It calls for an insider's perspective. The white writers are unable to present this because they do not have the Indian sensibilities. Thus, our study aims at studying the fiction of the American Indian writers, focussing thereby on the richness inherent in the tribal cultures which has wrongly been dismissed as part savagery and part superstition, recorded and fossilized by curious anthropologists and used by men who have an eye on the box office or the best seller list; on the image of the Native American as he sees it; and the awareness of ethnicity in the Indians.<sup>22</sup> Our essential point of view is therefore Indian. The distortions, sufferings and exploitation which are a result of cultural conflict, and which are highlighted in the analyses, are largely those that are perceived and experienced by the Native American sensibilities.

A detailed thematic study of three Native American novels will be undertaken to examine cultural conflict and the rise of ethnic consciousness among the various tribal communities that we come across in these novels. The thesis aims at exploring the changing consciousness of the Native American community in the course of cultural contact as seen in the three novels. The past history of the race indicates that constant contacts with the whites led to frequent conflicts which resulted in suffering and misery on the part of the Indians. Their defeat often led to "the death of Indian gods, the destruction of their mythologies, the abandonment of their religions."<sup>23</sup> Thus, beginning with the Spanish conquest of the New World in 1493 to the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620 and since then, the Indians have been combating hostile forces. In the long run, not only were the Indians subjugated politically, but their spirits were ruthlessly crushed. The physical and psychological surrender by the Indians paved the way for easy acculturation and thereby assimilation. William Coffer points out that in the "inexorable march of the acculturation process," Americans decided that "the Indian must speak, think and act like a whiteman, with no vestiges of his original culture. Failure to do this indicated not a flaw in the system or methods used in dealing with Indians, but rather a flaw in the Indian himself."<sup>24</sup> He attributes this philosophy and the consequences to "the diametric philosophies of life and its values"<sup>25</sup> in the two cultures.

large scale acculturation drive. The chief tools were politico-religious in nature: the acquisition of lands, enactment of laws and which did not favour the Indians, and widespread conversion to Christianity by overzealous missionaries. Once the tribes became government wards, assimilation became simpler. In the process, acculturation and Christianity emerged as major forces which brought about a loss of tradition, erosion of Indian tribal community life and Americanization of the Indians.

However, the minorities in America, having become conscious of the significance of their unique identity and ethnic heritage, have changed the traditional 'melting pot' notion of American society into one of 'cultural pluralism.' It is in this context that our dissertation analyzes the cultural conflict and the rise of ethnic consciousness in the post-war fiction of the American Indians. For our purpose we have selected N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn, James Welch's Winter in the Blood and Leslie M. Silko's Ceremony. By close textual analyses of three novels we have examined the plight of the individual and the community caught between two cultures, belonging to neither. Beginning with the individual's malady, we trace the tenuous link that exists between the individual and the community and establish that the "sickness" of the individual represents that of the community. In the course of their recovery, the protagonists become aware of their ethnic heritage revealed through the tribal history and tradition. The novels follow similar patterns of rejection of white values

and a return to native cultures. This process is a result of the emergence of ethnic consciousness among the communities,

The three novels chosen by us are written by three major writers who are eminent storytellers as well as sensitive poets. The choice of the texts was also governed by our thematic interests. They deal with the chief concerns of the day—the sense of estrangement in people who live amidst two cultures and dual world views; who are unable to identify with either culture, and consequently appear fragmented and half-realized. The community the writers depict lives in the post-World War II period, surviving with a sense of disillusionment as a result of cultural conflict and war, and the values which it stands for. Their sense of disillusionment is further aggravated by their hatred for agencies like the BIA, Reservation and reservation life, relocation plans—factors, in short, which are largely responsible for and crucial in determining the present day status of the Native Americans.

These novels provide an excellent chance to study and interpret the emergence and growth of cultural consciousness among the tribal communities. In the period following World War II, many minorities have produced a corporate body of literary works despite racial hatred and prejudices that they have to constantly face.<sup>27</sup>

The literature about the Native American life, written by the Native Americans in English forms the primary basis of our study. This also defines the use of the term "American

Indian literature."<sup>28</sup> In this sense it is in full agreement with Professor Dorris' view - "the writings in English by Native people about Native themes."<sup>29</sup> Their perspective is that of an insider — one who is able to understand fully the Indian experience and the implications of being an Indian, and shares a common cultural and racial past with a community. In short, they have the Indian ethos which the white writers do not have.

In the chapters that follow, we have analyzed three novels — Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn, James Welch's Winter in the Blood and Leslie Silko's Ceremony. In doing so the world view and the values of the whites are those that are held by average Americans. It is possible that many of the arguments which have been given in favour of the Native Americans on certain concepts like "rationality" and "irrationality" can be countered by certain schools of philosophy in western thought. However, we are not dealing with such esoteric schools of intellectual thought. The world views of both the cultures are those which an average citizen or a community at large believes in. Similarly, the censure against Christianity is merely in terms of the role it has played in the acculturation of the Indians. The image of the Catholic priest that emerges represents an average priest on an Indian reservation. This is an image which is perceived by the Indians.

Further, the analyses have been interpreted from the American Indian cultural perspective. This helps us understand the manner in which certain concepts, ideas and beliefs

function in tribal cultures. It also explains the nature of their roles. A cultural perspective of the Indians also helps us comprehend elements which we, like Angela in House Made of Dawn, find incomprehensible yet "so full of appearances." Because the role and nature of myths is so widely different in white culture and Indian world view, it is difficult to understand them from a non-Indian cultural perspective. This has been lucidly explained by Paula Gunn Allen as she traces the diverse meanings of the terms "myth" and "mythology" and concludes that there is a lot of confusion surrounding discussions on these terms. However, talking about the role and meaning of Indian myth she explains:

A Native American myth is a story that relies preeminently on symbol as a vehicle of articulation. It generally relates a series of events and uses a supernatural, heroic figure as the center of focus for both events and symbols incorporated. As a story, it demands the immediate, direct participation of the listener. Detached, analytical, distanced observation will render the mythopoeic vision inoperable for the listener. Native American myths are magical in this way, for magic depends on relationship and participation for its realization. Because of this, these myths cannot be understood more than peripherally by the adding-machine mind; for when removed from their special and necessary context, these stories are no longer myths; they are dead or dying curiosities. . . . This is not to say that only a devout Oglala can comprehend the myth of White Buffalo Cow Woman. . . it does mean that only those who accept the nonmaterial or nonordinary reality of things can hope to comprehend either figure. All others are, of necessity, excluded.<sup>30</sup>

The best example of "myth at its most sacred and abstract" is the vision of Black Elk<sup>31</sup> which is "in truth a metaphysical statement"<sup>32</sup> loaded with a number of significant implications.

Most of us, however, like Auntie in Ceremony, have a tendency to assume that the scientific world view, on which the entire civilization of the white man is based, is absolute. There is, in fact, no other way of perceiving the world. Consequently, the scientific outlook and method have not only coloured the vision of the West, but has also influenced its basic pattern of thinking and believing.<sup>33</sup> In order to understand the full import of ethnic cultures, this narrow outlook has to be cast aside.

The analyses have been studied from the standpoint of acculturation in order to understand the phenomenon of cultural conflict. In doing so, we have tried to show the effects of acculturation on the individual, the community, the socio-economic life of the natives, their resistance to assimilation and the final assertion and emergence of ethnic awareness in the people. The impact of cultural aggression on the tribal societies, or to generalize, in most societies or minority communities, where political and economic imbalances are instrumental in shaping relationships, is felt, to begin with, largely through acculturation. Acculturation is a major step towards total assimilation. The use of the term "cultural aggression" in the present study relates to the interplay of these two. In other words, wherever these two words occur, they are indicative of aggression at work - either in the past or in the present. This interplay implies change, which means the replacement of traditional, native values by the

core-culture Anglo-Saxon values;<sup>34</sup> the passing away of an old order and the ushering in of a new one.

By the broader term assimilation, we mean the merger of one culture into the culture of another society. That is, if there are two distinct cultures X and Y in a society, assimilation would mean the loss of the "disinctiveness" of culture Y due to its adoption of the traits and values of culture X. In other words, assimilation would result in homogeneity, eliminating those factors which were responsible for labelling one culture as Y. The resulting culture that we get is X, though it can also result in an altogether new culture Z, which would be neither X nor Y. But then we would term this process as "synthesis," not assimilation.

Assimilation is a larger term involving many sub-processes. In his theory of assimilation and melting pot, Milton Gordon has pointed out seven such sub-processes viz., cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behaviour receptional and civic assimilation.<sup>35</sup> These sub-processes, in this order, lead towards the assimilation goal. The first sub-process, which is cultural or behavioral assimilation, has been assigned a special term known as "acculturation." It involves changes in behavioral patterns, religious beliefs, rituals, language, dress, thinking patterns, values and loss of tradition.

However, it should be noted that acculturation need not necessarily imply assimilation. The negroes, for example, are largely acculturated, yet they have been unable to assimilate into the core society. Acculturation, therefore, has



two sides to it: it can be imposed externally (as has been the case with the Native Americans) or it can be acquired on its own to gain status in society (the American Blacks).<sup>36</sup> It is, thus, up to the host society to accept the acculturated minority.

When acculturation is imposed externally, it can make its impact felt in two ways: direct and indirect. Direct impact would mean imposition of laws and Acts by the government so that the minority is left with little or no choice. Indirect imposition would involve some kind of a psychological warfare, which might include rewards, incentives, punishments, favours, promises, economic gain and rise in social status. In such circumstances, the minorities acquire core-culture values either consciously or unconsciously.

While perceptive and often thought provoking studies have been carried out on Black and Jewish fiction, the American Indian fiction has been relatively unexplored. Although various journals have published a large number of critical articles on different authors, the field lacks full length critical studies, except, perhaps, for Professor Charles R. Larson's pioneering work. His book American Indian Fiction<sup>37</sup> is an excellent introduction to this new area. He deals with sixteen authors who have written over a period ranging from 1899 to 1977 (i.e. from Pokagon's Queen of Woods to Silko's Ceremony). However, his analyses appear to be rather cursory. For example, the three major novels of the post-war fiction, which have been chosen by us for textual

analysis, have also been examined by Larson. In each case his method is to summarize the story, highlight some stylistic devices used by the writers, present a brief note on the authors and offer a few critical insights. Consequently, some of Larson's analyses read like book reviews. However, one advantage that he gains from following the historical approach is that he covers a wide range of authors and succeeds in categorizing works under various sub-headings like "Assimilation" (Queen of Woods, Wild Harvest and Black Jack Davy), "Rejection: The Reluctant Return" (The Surrounded and House Made of Dawn), "History of People" (Winter Count, Seven Arrows, and Tsali) and so on.

Although these sub-headings provide him with ample scope for a thematic study, Larson does not pursue them. Hence the scope of the study appears limited. But what he loses in depth he gains in range. Interestingly, in the course of his study, a number of diverse themes surface. Some of the important themes which we have been able to find are:

- (a) The ethnic clash is often every bit as apparent in their writings as it has been in their lives (p. 168).
- (b) The theme of race appears to be disappearing from American Indian fiction, as the writers begin to turn back to smaller cultural unit, the family, and its extension, the tribal groups (p. 170).
- (c) The theme of the passive protagonist who appears almost a man to be incapable of acting decisively, of fighting back against the world that surrounds and encapsulates them. (p. 170).<sup>38</sup>
- (d) Indian consciousness in these works extends far beyond the arena of Native American people themselves . . . potentially embraces

the very people long considered as its oppressors (p. 171).

Larson begins with a lot of expectation from the American Indian fiction, but does not find anything distinctive about it as he concludes his study. He feels that it is difficult to classify these works since "the novels by American Indian authors are not very different from a great deal of fiction written by other American writers."<sup>39</sup> This indeed is not an entirely valid claim: it may be valid in the case of the pre-war fiction, but certainly not of the post-war writings where the Indian authors are distinctly ethnic both in form and content.

Larson seems to have missed out the Indian ethos in these works. Even the ethnicity which manifests itself in their works is quite unlike that in any other minority literature. The Native American myths, legends, patterns, motifs, narrative techniques and sensibilities combine together to give them a unique and distinct identity and flavour. It is true that the writers have been influenced by American writers, but their approach to literature adds a new dimension to the existing form: For example, discussing Silko's fiction, Professor Jim Ruppert points out the presence of a new "perception," a new form in American story-telling where:

the story has a greater, truer reality than the objective reality of the world around us. In the story reality, the seeming simplicity and reality of objective actions and [sic] reinterpreted and woven into a larger scheme through which the action takes on a new and deeper meaning and their place in a mythic pattern emerges. The characters and the readers must believe as much as the author

that the world exists in story which gives objective reality its meaning, or they are lost. Although the story may be stretched over eons . . . we can enter the story reality . . . it is only through entry into the story reality that each character is given his/her reality and perhaps ultimately so are we, the readers.<sup>40</sup>

Modern writers like Yeats, Lawrence, Joyce and Eliot too have employed mythic element in their writings. But in each case the use of myths is either in the form of personal myths, as is the case with Yeats, or structural devices as in the works of Joyce and Lawrence. While in modern fiction "fiction and reality merge into one sphere," in Silko, the story "creates a reality that merges with the non-story reality."<sup>41</sup>

There is one more book of which one shall make a brief mention.<sup>42</sup> Abraham Chapman's anthology Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretations offers valuable cultural insights into traditional and contemporary Native American literature and various aspects of Native American thought and expression. The range of the anthology is clearly defined by its subtitle: "A Gathering of Indian Memories, Symbolic Contexts, and Literary Criticism." Chapman, like Larson, has covered a wide range from a Seneca legend to the contemporary criticism. But except for one article on Momaday by Barabara Strelke, all other essays are on "memories and symbolic contexts." Chapman's aim is to enhance our "critical understanding to the pleasures and appreciation of Native American literature."<sup>43</sup> In this sense the book offers a theoretical basis for what goes

into the making of Native American writings - poetry, legends, myths, stories and fiction. To this extent his book is certainly valuable.

With the preceding discussion in the background, we shall now analyze the cultural conflict and ethnic consciousness in the three novels selected for study. Beginning with Momaday's House Made of Dawn in Chapter II, we shall proceed to discuss Welch's Winter in the Blood and Silko's Ceremony in Chapters III and IV respectively.

## CHAPTER II

### AN OLD HOME OF THE SPIRIT: MOMADAY'S HOUSE MADE OF DAWN

In time, for the Sun is setting on . . .  
Though late, O soil, it is not too late  
To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone,  
Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone.

- Jean Toomer in Cane

AN OLD HOME OF THE SPIRIT: MOMADAY'S HOUSE MADE OF DAWN

Commenting on the state of modern American society, which is both directionless and disoriented, the militant Native American leader Vine Deloria, Jr. states:

The root cause of this condition can be found in the postwar technological and political developments: industrialism on a mass scale; electronic communications; improved transportation facilities; universal, although sometimes superficial education; and the emergence of America as a world super-power.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of these factors on the American Indian communities is transparent. For them the war and the post-war periods have been full of stress. Industrialism and the scientific world view have indeed distanced them from their people and land. Abel, in Momaday's House Made of Dawn<sup>2</sup>, is one such stricken-soul who has returned from the throes of World War II as the novel begins. It is the home coming of a dead warrior. For in a war, not all deaths are due to bullets and neither are all deaths physical. In the novel then, Abel's return appears to be largely symbolic. His drunkenness at the time of his return indicates his loss of contact with the present reality. As he descends from the bus, his senses are numb; his body is listless; he fails to recognize his grandfather Francisco, and walks with an unsteady gait. He is obviously out of order or harmony with the world which surrounds him. Consequently, there is an absence of a "sense of place" in him. This sense of place

can be described as "the perceptions of a culturally imposed symbolic order on a particular topography,"<sup>3</sup> or more concretely, as the sense of belonging to a "living organic, believing community, perhaps unrealized purpose."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the novel, Abel attempts to regain the order and harmony of life, and symbolically journeys through various experiences in order to recover his lost sense of place. For it is from this sense of place that he will ultimately find his identity and be able to define his self, because it is from this sense that the Native American draws "strength enough to hold still against all the forces of chance and order."<sup>5</sup>

Abel himself is aware that he has lost this "strength." This becomes clear later in the novel as he gradually realizes that he "had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void" (p. 96).

Abel realizes that in order to regain his sense of place and bring into his life harmony and order, the loss of which is a result of cultural contact, he has to enter the old rhythm of life. According to Professor Barbara Strelke, the tension she sees in Abel is "The tension between the rural and the industrial/technological which is typically a condition of modern western man."<sup>6</sup> This tension, however, is alien to an Indian like Abel. It is not surprising, therefore, that Abel does not seek his cure by consulting a



psychologist or counsellor. Instead, he tries to enter the tribal life of his community for his malaise needs a sociological cure and he appears to be aware of this fact.

In Section I of the novel, Abel makes two earnest attempts to return to the community life. The first attempt is in the form of a journey into the past, which Abel recounts in order to regain his lost sensibilities; the second is his spirited participation in the feast of Santiago. In this section of the chapter, these two attempts will be discussed in detail, in order to show Abel's spirited efforts and the resulting failures.

A day after his return to Walatowa, which means the village of the bear, Abel climbs a hill where "Silence lay like water on land, and even the frenzy of dogs below was feeble and a long time in finding the ear" (p. 14). This is his first step towards the journey he is about to undertake. In a sense he has already distanced himself from the world around him so as to delve into the past, re-live that past life if possible, and derive strength from it to restore balance in his life. This past life is presented in the form of seven discrete and fleeting memories. Although these memories are transient, they are vivid and meaningful. They bring out Abel's sense of loneliness and disappointment since each memory throws light on his mental make-up, and helps us understand the plight of a man caught in the midst of cultural conflict.<sup>7</sup>

The dominant mood of the seven memories is that of fear, disillusionment and loss. He remembers, for instance,

the deaths of his mother, Vidal his brother, the trapped eagle, and the senseless killing of men during the Second World War.

The first memory which stirs within Abel is of his childhood days. The images of fear and death are dominant as he recalls how the awful expanse of nature, seen in the motion of passing clouds, instilled fear in him and made him cry. He then remembers his sense of being estranged from his people because, like his father, Abel too is "an outsider," "somehow foreign and strange." This feeling is due to the mixed and unknown ancestry of Abel. Finally, Abel is reminded of the death of his mother, a beautiful woman with a voice which was "as soft as water" (p. 15).

In these fleeting moments of the past, Abel's inherent sense of fear, loneliness, alienation and insecurity surface strongly—all arising out of the awesome image of nature, his father being outsider, perhaps a Navajo or a Sia or an Isleta, and the death of his mother. These have left deep impressions on his young sensitive mind, as it has not been easy for him to erase them.

Fear continues to haunt him in the next memory which begins with the onsetting of fear: "Something frightened him." This frightening object is an abnormal being a white mustachioed hunch-backed woman called Nicholas who is a witch, the very embodiment of evil. Confronting Abel in the corn-fields, she screams unintelligible curses at him and he runs for his life. However, running is not an escape from fear which now persists in another form: the sucking sound of

the wind dipping in a hole in some rock fills him with woeful dread and "For the rest of his life it would be for him the particular sound of anguish" (p. 16). His snake-killer dog is also scared as it "quivered and laid back its ears."

Abel's confrontation with the Albino later offers a striking parallel to this scene. The Albino, like Nicholas, is abnormal, fearsome and evil. He too appears in the cornfields accompanied by whispering sounds, quite unintelligible to Francisco.

The lurking fear of death overshadows the third memory in the form of his brother's untimely death. Death had made Vidal's face "terrible, thin, and colorless" (p. 16) which is in contrast to the beauty of his mother even at the time of her death. Just as he was scared of the moaning of the wind earlier, he is now afraid of another fearsome sound here, "the low sound, itself, rising and falling . . . unmistakable and unbroken" (p. 16). This mourning prayer-chant means loneliness for Abel, since he would now be without Vidal.

The fourth memory is of initiation into adulthood, symbolized by the doe hunt and the love-making with Julianio Medina's daughter. The hunt symbolizes Abel's initiation into the larger community life. It is a happy occasion for anyone who is on the threshold of manhood. But it is not the success or the thrill of the hunt which Abel recalls now. Instead he remembers the blood and the injured bird "lying across the trunk of a dead tree with its tongue out and smoking and the wound full of hot blood, welling out" (p. 17).

Closely following this is an equally dismaying sense of manhood. Abel's first sexual consummation is disappointing, since Medina's daughter is unwilling to give herself the second time. She runs away teasingly and Abel, too drunk to run after her, feels annoyed.

The fifth memory is long, concrete and of vital significance: "awful, holy sight, full of meaning and magic" (p. 18) is how Abel perceives the eagle flying with a snake caught in its talons. By association Abel is reminded of the Bahkyush tribe's struggle for survival, as he recalls the history of the Eagle Watchers Society.

He is also reminded of the rabbit he had killed for an eagle bait. This fills him with disgust. Thinking of it he feels disappointed and sad, and a little later feels ashamed of himself to see the graceful golden eagle reduced to a heap of "drab," "shapeless," "ungainly bird." Joseph Trimmer observes a close parallel between Abel's present situation and the eagle's: both have been caught in similar alien environments. Abel resolves the eagle's dilemma by wringing its neck in darkness, although he has no solution for himself right now.<sup>8</sup>

The trapping of the eagle and Abel's shame, disgust and misery remind him of his war experiences and the moment before his departure, in the last two memories. Like the eagle, he too feels trapped and surrounded by "a sense of being all alone" as soon as he closes the door of his house. Symbolically, Abel has closed the door to the Indian life. The new life is heralded by the horn of the bus.

As he sits trapped in the bus, he can feel the "onset of loneliness and fear" (p. 25).

At the same time, the jarring sound of the bus engine is new and alien to him. This is his first bus ride. The "hard motion of the wheels" is in sharp contrast to the "incredibly fast," "streamlined" and perfectly controlled motion of the eagle, or of the cosmic motion of the universe which has been explained to Abel and Vidal by Francisco in terms of "the larger motion and meaning of the great organic calendar . . . the very cycle of the sun and of all the suns that were and were to come" (p. 178). Thus, the new world which is mechanized and jarring, is incomprehensible and alien to Abel. Although he tries to make sense out of it, all that he experiences is "a lurch and a loss of momentum" (p. 25). Symbolically, Abel has lost his sense of balance and place right at the beginning of his journey into the new world. And it is little wonder and highly ironical to see him return years later, drunk and still not having regained it. Seen in this light, the present journey of going back into the past is an attempt at regaining this balance of time and place.

However, lost in the cacophony of engine sounds and shifting gears, Abel realizes with tragic irony, that he has lost the fields, the land, and the people - "Only when it was too late that he remember<sup>ed</sup> to look back in the direction of the fields" (p. 25). The memory ends with dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

The final memory is connected with the recent past. Abel remembers with a sense of fear and nausea, the war

itself as he recalls the fearful images associated with it: dead bodies strewn all around; the intermingling of limbs with the litter of leaves, all reduced to a senseless heap of decay. Added to this is the sound of "something low and incessant" which is similar to the sound of the death prayer-chant at the time of Vidal's death and the wind sucking in the hollow of a tree. It mingles with the "whir and explosion of fire." Very soon it assumes shape in the form of a "calm, strange and terrific" looking machine, which deafens the world around him. The machine looms large and heavy like a foreboding evil, and leaves him shaking violently. The passing of this "great iron hull" is followed by the wind which, "arose and ran along the slope." This image thus links the second and the third memories with the final memory where the sound of the wind is associated with anguish.

In the end, this journey into the past leaves him tired and exhausted. He feels "the tension in his knees, and then the weight of the sun on his head and hands" (p. 28). The journey is highly unsatisfying and it intensifies his quest for a more meaningful existence. Abel's awareness of the history of the Bahkyush tribe appears very significant. Now in his moment of loss, he is reminded of the proud nature of the tribe, which in the face of extinction, managed to survive. As Joseph Trimmer suggests:

By maintaining an allegiance to traditions and ceremonies central to their fate, they became an important and even a superior society within the tribe: 'it was, as if, conscious of having come close to extinction they had got a keener sense of pride . . . they had acquired a tragic

sense which gave them as a race so much dignity and bearing.<sup>9</sup>

This situation now appears to be that of Abel, and he is aware of it. The memory, thus, thematically links Abel's problem with that of the Bahkyush tribe's. It indicates to him that a man can retain his sense of pride and dignity, in adverse circumstances, by staying close to his cultural and racial heritage. It also shows that a minority can exist on its own, depending on its sense of pride and strength.

Thus, with a new awareness, which, however, does not produce immediate results, Abel returns to the present: "He stood without thinking, nor did he move; only his eyes roved after something . . . something" (p. 28). The present reality of the land is uninviting, for surrounding him is the landscape "pale and hard;" a town where streets were "empty and sterile in the white glare of the sun;" where there were "no dimensions of depth to the walls; even the doorways and windows were flat and impenetrable. There was no motion on the air . . . the town seemed to disappear into the earth" (p. 31). Yet, Abel has this little satisfaction of being at home.

Abel's journey into the past is an attempt to travel, as Momaday himself describes, "from chaos to order, from dischord to harmony."<sup>10</sup> The difference, however, is that Abel's journey, unlike Momaday's, is a failure. In another sense, this journey is a kind of ritual which is performed by a "sick" person, very similar to what Tayo does in Ceremony, in order to cure himself. In the Navajo culture, the landscape

plays an important part. Landscape, however, fails to emerge as an evocative force. It is, on the contrary, full of awe and fear, death and decay. In sharp contrast Benally, Abel's Navajo friend, succeeds in evoking the force of land, as we shall see later.

Abel, however, does not give up. If past experiences are not altogether successful, he tries to seek meaning in the present. A few days later on July 25, he tries to become a part of the social fabric by participating in the feast of Santiago. But he seems, from the very beginning, fated to lose. In spite of his efforts, he loses the rooster pulling game because he is not very familiar with it and feels highly uncomfortable. The game becomes a symbolic test for him in which he, like the rooster, is flailed and shredded to pieces, thereby being turned into a sacrificial object.

Abel, like the rooster, is buried deep in personal tragedy. Publicly he is hauled out, humiliated at the hands of the "white man." But on his own part, Abel's attempts have been sincere. He wanted to be a part of the Indian community, by relating himself to its traditions and customs, and participating in the social life of the tribe. He had been unable to establish a communion with Francisco, but he decided to attend the feast of Santiago all the same. Again, although he had been a failure with himself in the opening chapter, as seen in the preceding discussion, he still did not give up. This urge to seek a self identity, to identify himself with his cultural heritage, gives him courage, and so very symbolically, he discards his uniform and wears his old



clothes. But feeling uneasy among his own men, he sits rigidly and too carefully, on his grandfather's black-maned mare. He offers a direct contrast to the "large, lithe and white-skinned" Albino who rides a "fine black horse of good blood." While Abel is sitting on "a gentle mare," the Albino rides a "high-spirited horse." While Abel gives a very poor account of himself, filling Angela with contempt, the Albino is swift and bold. His movements excite Angela who is "thrilled to see it handled so, as if the white man were its will and all its shivering force were drawn to his bow. A perfect commotion, full of symmetry and sound (p. 43).

Since the Albino is the victor, he has the right, according to the custom, to choose his "victim." And as fate would have it, he decides upon Abel. Through his hands Abel suffers defeat and humiliation: "Again and again the white man struck him, heavily and brutally . . . struck, back and forth . . . (p. 44).

It is with a sense of dismay and wounded pride that Abel walks into the canyon later and tries to sum up his situation. He realizes that he is nowhere near being a part of the Indian world. The paragraph on p. 57 is poignant and stirring. It is a tragic moment of self realization:

His return to the town had been a failure, for all his looking forward. He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter the old rhythm of tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it. . . . Had he been able to say it, anything of his own language—even the commonplace formula of greeting "Where are you going"—which had no being beyond sound, no visible substance, would once again have shown

him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb—silence was the older and better part of custom still—but inarticulate . . . he wanted to make a song out of the coloured canyon, the way the women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of coloured yarn, but he had not got the right words together (p. 57).

The significance which Abel seems to attach to the loss of his language is not without basis. For the American Indian, language plays a vital role in one's relation to the self and community. It forms an essential link between the individual and the community, the microcosm and the macrocosm. Thus, Paula Gunn Allen informs that

The artistry of the tribe is married to the essence of language itself, for in language we seek to share our being with that of the community, and thus to share in the communal awareness of the tribe. In this art, the greater self and all-that-is are blended into a harmonious whole, and in this way the concept of being that is the fundamental and sacred spring of life is given voice and being for all . . . and through the sacred power of utterance he seeks to shape and mold, to direct and determine the forces that surround and govern our lives and that of all things.<sup>11</sup>

Abel's frustration culminates a few days later when he is confronted with the Albino during the feast of Porcingula. All of a sudden he is filled with a feeling of power and strength, revulsion and terror, and also with the courage to kill the impending evil in the form of a snake, i.e., the Albino—"In his terror he knew only to wield the knife" (p. 78). This brings a halt to Abel's further attempts to seek ethnic identity for the white law steps in. It is only after six years that Abel resumes his efforts to rejuvenate himself and tries to come back to the old reservation

life. For the present he is once again "trapped" in the twines of the white man's world. Summing up his situation Barbara Strelke writes, "Abel recognizes and acts upon the form, but not the substance of things. He is not attuned to Francisco, his grandfather, nor to the people of the Pueblo."<sup>12</sup>

#### THE COMMUNITY:

In her study of House Made of Dawn, Martha S. Trimble points out how cultural and linguistic barriers are capable of isolating a person. She says, "If one voluntarily or forcibly mixes with another culture and its language, he may find that in the interim, he has lost both cultures, and must be re-acculturated."<sup>13</sup>

This happens to be the case, not only with Abel but also with a host of other members of the Indian community present in the novel. All these characters belong to a lost generation which has been unable to find its roots, or one which is clinging tenaciously to the eroding cultural soil. Thus, Abel's personal dilemma appears to be a part of the larger social dilemma. It is something which afflicts most Indians at heart and runs deep through the very hinterland of the reservation life. In order to see the position of these Indians clearly, it is important to notice that there are two categories of Indians in the novel: One, who are still following their traditional life styles, and second, those who have adopted, by and large, the American way of life, and, from a pragmatic point of view, are apparently happy and satisfied.

In the first category, there are people like Francisco, Juliano Medina, the Dine tribe and a host of Pueblo people. This category is seen as a community. Francisco best symbolizes the spirit of these people. It is through his perceptions that we realize the agony of a mature generation as it perceives the gradual decay that has set in its rich culture, and the personal tragedy in not being able to do anything significant about it. The state of their culture is best symbolized by the physical deformity of old Francisco who is lame.

Francisco's world is one which is sustained by his unflinching faith in the tribal customs and tradition. It is presented through a series of incidents, each one of which shows the strong link that unites the past and present. To start with, right at the beginning of the first chapter, before Francisco sets out to receive Abel, he sets a trap for a bird in order to acquire a prayer plume. There is hope and expectation in his act of catching a summer tanager or a mountain blue bird with plumes of the pale colour of April skies, since prayer plumes should be beautiful according to the local customs. In an article on the Hopi Indians, Jake Page informs us that the prayer plumes are tied to bushes in the hope of harmonious times. These Indians believe that "evil will be removed as the bush is stripped bare, making a spiritual space for the good that will replace them."<sup>14</sup> Yet, at the onset of his journey he meets with disappointment, for all that he has been able to trap is an ordinary sparrow. He, however, sets the trap again but ironically

gets caught in it—"Si bien hecho!" he exclaims, seeing the white line above his nail, formed by the spring action of the reed. At the end of Section I, around August 2, Francisco inspects the reed again—"it was still there but the rise of the river had reached it and made it spring" (p. 80). The pattern that emerges in this: He begins with hope, meets disappointment; hopes again only to be disappointed once more. On July 20, when he sets out on his journey "he was alone on the wagon road," and almost two weeks later after Abel's arrival ". . . he was alone in the fields. He only knew that he was alone again" (p. 81). Francisco, thus, lives a life of hope and disappointment, of expectation and disillusionment quite symbolic of the ordinary and listless life of an average American Indian living on the reservations.

Like Abel, Francisco too is a victim of nostalgic moments which haunt him in his loneliness. As he continues his journey, for example, he is reminded of the race "for good hunting and harvests" which he had run in his youth. Yet another way in which Francisco's rich world is communicated to the reader is in the form of different ceremonies and rituals performed by the community. In the first section, we witness the feast of Santiago, a Catholic saint, who appears to be the originator of the pre-Christian Pueblo culture. The rooster pulling ceremony, mysterious as it appears to be, is an associated activity of the feast. The passage where Angela and Father Olgin walk towards the Middle gives us a good idea of the life led by these Indians who form a part of Francisco's world. There were houses

amidst grape, melon and corn fields. The entire land was reeling under the spell of drought. They notice a thin man combing his long hair quite oblivious of their presence. As they pass through the town

They saw faces in the dark windows and doorways of the houses, half in hiding, watching with wide solemn eyes . . . . There was an excitement all around, a ceaseless murmur under the sound of the drum, lost in the back of the walls, apart from the dead silent light of the afternoon . . . . In the end of July the town smelled of animals, and smoke, and sawed lumber, and the sweet, moist smell of bread that has been cut open and left to stand (pp. 40-41).

From their social life the focus shifts to the cultural activities of the Pueblo people. Rituals in this community are performed with rhythmic regularity since they are an integral part of the life style of the Indians. The ritual, which is being performed now, involves the burying of a rooster till its neck and pulling it out by men who are on horseback. To an outsider the entire ceremony might appear incomprehensible, as it does to Angela. She is unable to grasp its significance although she finds it "so full of appearance" (p. 43).

Thus, the inability of the white man (Angela) to appreciate and understand the culture of another race is a result of oversimplification of the life of the American Indians. Indian life is diverse. The term 'Indian' is simply an umbrella term which shelters so many different tribes like the Navajos (Ben), Pueblos (Abel, Francisco) and Kiowas (Tosamah), as seen in the novel. Momaday indicates the existence of the Bahkyush tribe hailing from the Tanaon city

of Bahkyula. With their sense of pride and dignity, the Bahkyulas not only managed to survive in the face of extinction, but even today "the ancient blood of this forgotten tribe still ran in the veins of men" (p. 19). In fact, this small example indicates how beautifully the two cultures have synthesized. The Christian culture, on the other hand, has failed to achieve this kind of synthesis because of its supercilious attitude and rigidity of approach towards the native cultures. Thus even after centuries of Catholic influence, the Indians have retained their **ethos**.

The people of the town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were a long time in conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make them living from the things that are and have always been within their reach; while in the discrimination of pride they acquire from their conquerors only luxury of example. They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting (p. 56).

In this context it is interesting to notice the views of anthropologist Robin Fox who writes: "They the Indians were sufficiently resistant to the whites to remain distinct, but they were sufficiently accommodating to accept enough of white culture and domination to survive."<sup>15</sup> With the advent of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, the Pueblo Indians absorbed Spanish ways and even religion "but they kept their rituals intact, unmixed with the alien faith. . . . They learned Spanish, but they never forgot their own tongues

and they never let Spanish intrude into the ceremonial life that was the core of their culture."<sup>16</sup>

This successfully explains the community's skepticism in general, and Francisco's in particular, towards Christianity. Therefore, in spite of their apparent faith, they continue to practice their "heathen" customs which are untainted by an alien culture.

To show the richness of the tribal cultures, Momaday intersperses the novel with myths, origin tales and the history of the people. He effectively shows how these tribes contributed to the richness of other tribes. In the earlier sections of the book the activities of the Eagle Watchers Society and an account of the feasts of Santiago and Porcungula are narrated in detail. As the myth goes, Santiago, disguised as a peon, finds a hospitable home in an old couple's house. This couple sacrifices the only rooster in the house in order to satisfy their guest's hunger. Later on, this guest wins the hand of the king's daughter but when his real identity is revealed (that of a peon) the king tries to get him killed. But the rooster which he had eaten earlier comes out to save him and provides him with a sword. The saint later sacrifices the rooster and the horse for the sake of the Pueblo people. Father Olgin and Angela now witness a parallel ceremony, yet fail to see its meaning due to their ignorance of the Pueblo culture.

Another interesting tale is that of the origin of the Kiowas, who emerged from a sunless world since they came out of a hollow log. Coming in contact with the Crows of the



Plains, they acquired Tai-me, the sacred Sun-Dance doll.

According to the legend they have kinsmen in the night-sky in the form of the stars of the Big Dipper which, in reality, were seven sisters and one brother. The brother turned into a bear and ran after the sisters, who sat on a stump of tree which rose towards the sky. These seven sisters transformed into the Big Dipper.

It is not merely the legends or the myths which are brought into focus, but also the ideas they carry with them which reflect the essential nature of the Indians: "Man came down the ladder to the plain a long time ago. It was a slow migration, though he came only from the caves in the canyons and the tops of the mesas nearby" (p. 56). Thus, the Pueblos, in spite of foreign influence "have never changed their essential way of life," while the Dine people, who knew how to be beautiful, still know the art of making "bright blankets," "gleaming silver work" in the form of belts, buckles, bracelets and bow guards. They bring with them stones which have medicinal qualities with which an old man's vision can be cured. In the same way, the Kiowas are essentially warriors—"war being a matter of disposition rather than survival"—and so their inability to understand the "unrelenting advance of U.S. Cavalry" (p. 118). Because of Tai-me, these people acquired "the sense of destiny, therefore courage and pride." With great pride the narrative voice explains that, "No longer were they slaves to the simple necessity of survival; they were a lordly and dangerous society of fighters and thieves, hunters and priests of the sun" (p. 119).

It is a measure of the intense faith of these people in their heritage that the Pueblo culture continues to exist even today despite the pressure exerted on it by the dominant culture. During the feast of Porcingula the past is very much a part of the present: the day appears different from the normal days. There are fewer men in the fields; women run around "like squirrels full of chatter," and "there was a curious sound of deliberation and haste all around" (p. 65). There are wagons on the road to San Ysidro bringing the older generation of the Dine, who are essentially wine traders. Along with them would come their "beautiful straight-backed girls in sunlit silver and velveteen, supple and slim and born to the saddle." Accompanying them would be "panting dogs," "drab and drunk" men, "fat, degenerate squaws," "wizened keepers" of the clan, and finally fools. There is so much of diversity, and yet a unified clan, maintaining its links with the Pueblos (p. 66).

The ceremony that follows offers a striking parallel to Santiago's feast. The ceremony itself is complex, involving a little black horse which is reminiscent of Abel's roan in the earlier feast, and a bull whose "eyes were black metal buttons" reminding the reader of the Albino's eyes which were "round black glasses." The roles, however, are reversed: it is the bull who is subjected to ridicule. He is chased by the children, just as Father Olgin, in a parallel scene, is ridiculed by children who "shouted at him . . . and the cries of the children became a shrill and incessant chant: 'Padre! Padre! Padre!'" (p. 70). Full of meaning for Francisco

"this montage of rituals forms a unified tradition that gives design and meaning to existence."<sup>17</sup>

This rich culture, however, fails to impress the white missionaries who preach with Catholic blinkers. Hence Fr. Olgin's short-sightedness appears highly symbolic. The attitude of the whites towards the Indians and their way of life is seen through the diary of Fray Nicholas V, which Fr. Olgin reads so religiously. Fray Nicholas V feels frustrated to realize the impediments in his missionary zeal. In spite of the Christian morality that he has drilled into the Indians, he is pained at the idea that "they are still Indians at heart." Therefore, he feels hurt when he is not informed about the death of Tomacita Fragua. He is called only for the burial ceremony and there he is shocked to find them practicing "their dark customs," evident in the manner in which the dead body is buried by its kins: "there was blue and yellow meal on the floor . . . & 4 feathers in the dead hands turkey & brown Eagle. They had wound her in a blanket tight & I saw as not before her belly was swoln as with child & already full of stench" (p. 47). The burial ceremony produces absurd, almost comical thoughts in his mind, "I thought it would have given her hurt if she had been alive," he writes. For the priest, however, his thoughts are full of piety.

The inability of Fray Nicholas to understand the Indian point of view is obvious. Although an essential part of the Indian community he, like Fr. Olgin, has taken little pains to understand the symbolic offerings of the Indians. He simply labels them as "dark customs." Among the Pueblo

Indians the blue and yellow corn are fertility symbols. The blue colour stands for West while the yellow represents North. Corn is sprinkled over a dead body so that the departing spirit would send rain clouds.

In another entry dated 17th October 1888, Fray Nicholas complains of Francisco's unchristian activities: "He is one of them heathens," he writes, "& goes often in the kiva & puts on the horns & hides & does worship that serpent which is our most ancient enemy" (p. 50). He appears to be rudely shocked and pained at seeing Francisco behave in such a fashion. That Francisco has still not changed his "evil" ways is evident during the feast of Porcingula on August 1, 1945 (57 years later) when, in spite of his crooked leg, he climbs the high vertical wall of the kiva. The kivas, as Fox explains

are large semi-underground chambers that serve as meeting places and centers for native ceremonials . . . . A man takes his kiva from his father and a woman joins the kiva of her husband. Kiva represents a ritual division of labour and are where the large public ceremonials are organized. The main event is the corn on rain dance .<sup>18</sup>

It is quite obvious then that the ceremonies which Francisco is performing have nothing to do with what Fr. Nicholas refers to as worshipping "that serpent which is our most ancient enemy." His diary, in fact, indicates the degree of his cultural blindness and limited range of vision. Hence his inability to comprehend the Indian world view.

Later in his diary, Fr. Nicholas mentions how he fears Francisco who although evil "still took hold of the paten and the Host and so defiles me in the sight of my enemies."

Notice how Nicholas uses the same word "enemy" for Satan and the Indians alike. His disappointment on not seeing Francisco getting punished touches an almost absurd height when he admonishes God by saying, "Where is the Most Holy Spirit that he is not struck down at the moment. . . . Why am I betrayed who cannot desire to betray" (pp. 50-51). It is indeed ironical to see Francisco still "not struck down" in the year 1945. It is only when he is an octogenarian that Francisco will breathe his last.

In the preceding pages, the social, cultural and spiritual life of the Pueblo cultures has been discussed. The aim has been to show the complexity, beauty and vitality of the tribal culture which has managed to survive in the face of cultural onslaughts and the inability of Christianity to comprehend it. The tribal culture is certainly very different from the white man's culture. The social units of the Indians are closely knit with the larger community. At various points the tribal culture intersects and interacts with the American culture. The period in the novel spans from 1875 to 1945. This was a period when acculturation and assimilation among the Indians were gaining ground. The Navajo reservation had been established in 1873, soon after the Battle of the Little Big Horn. This was soon to be followed by the Dawes Act of 1887.<sup>19</sup> Commenting on this Coffer points out that "in the inexorable march of acculturation process" the Americans decided that the Indian must speak, think and act like a white man with no vestiges of his original culture."<sup>20</sup>

In spite of this, many Indians continued to adhere, in some form of the other, to their traditional lifestyles. The community shown in the novel is one such community. Although it remains organic in nature and grows richer even as it interacts with another tribal culture—the Dine's in this case—its growth is stunted when it interacts with the alien Christian culture. This is essentially due to the nature of the interaction. While the merger with the Dine tribe produces a culture which has the best of both the tribes, with Christian culture the interaction is not so productive. The Indians resent the over-bearing nature of Christianity and the white man's aggressiveness. In such an environment it is difficult for a minority culture to thrive healthily. Both the oppressor and the oppressed become suspicious of one another, as is obvious in the novel. The conversions of the natives are based on fear and guilt, not reverence or a change of heart. At the first given opportunity they revert to their native practices as is recorded both by Fr. Olgin and Fr. Nicholas. As we shall see later, this kind of a situation also occurs in the other two novels. People like Francisco continue to remain faithful to their old ways of life, live by the slow rhythms of nature and in spite of four centuries of Christianity "still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky . . ." (p. 56). Evidently, the priests on the reservations have not been able to understand this dichotomy.

The second way of life i.e. a synthesis of the American and Indian way of life, is presented in Section II "The Priest of

the Sun," which deals with the lives of some Pan-Indians. Their Pan-Indianism does not mean tribal unification. Rather, it aims at a gradual adaptation to the white man's life. Tosamah, Ben Benally, Henry Yellow Bull, Cristobal Cruz, and Napoleon kills-in-the Timber are the Pan-Indians, as is evident from the bombastic sign-board outside Tosamah's den:

HOLINESS PAN-INDIAN RESCUE MISSION  
Rev. J. B. B. Tosamah, Pastor & Priest of the Sun

Be kind to a white man today

The name of Tosamah is an interesting mixture, probably an attempt at a ludicrous synthesis, of Christianity and American Indian religions. 'Tosamah' appears to be a corrupted version of 'Tsomah' which means "yellow hair." 'Yellow Hair' is the name given by the Indians to General Custer, who is one of the most despised white man for the Indians. Interestingly, Momaday's Indian name, quite similar in sound is 'Tsotohah' which means "Red Bluff." Tosamah's name also carries the suffix "Big Bluff," and it is through him that Momaday delivers the sermon on "The Way to Rainy Mountain" which is, in fact, a memoir published separately by Momaday.<sup>21</sup> The prefix "Rev." is, of course, a Christian title, while J.B.B. is a mixture of Christian (John) and Indian (Big-Bluff) names. "Pastor" again is a Christian title which is combined with "Priest of the Sun," an Indian title, and this combination again is a hybrid between a Catholic priest and an Indian Shaman.

These lurid mixtures symbolize the Pan-Indian movement. The Pan-Indians form a group in the U.S. which appears to be

acculturated to a large extent, with the specific aim of synthesizing the American and the Indian way of life. Religious compromise is a major factor which unites them with the Americans, and this has been achieved through the Peyote cult, which drew heavily on tribal sources. Peyote sessions usually began on Saturday nights and continued till the dawn. The sessions were supposed to be held for specific purposes. Pan-Indianism, in an organized manner, started as a movement among the educated and the semi-educated Indians after the Progressive Era in America. It was based firmly on common Indian interests and identity which relegated tribal identities into the background. Their major theme was "accommodation to and acceptance of white society as permanent, rather than emphasis upon a vain hope of a return to the aboriginal condition," and the movement "sought through a blending of aboriginal and white elements to come to terms with the white society."<sup>22</sup> This is best summed up by Ben who feels that not only has one to change in order to live in a white man's world, but one has also to "forget the way it was, how you grew up and all. Sometimes it is hard, but you have to do it" (p. 135).

This acceptance of the harsh reality of forgetting the past and living the way the core culture lives, losing identity and thereby the sense of place forms the basis of acculturation in most societies. However, one only has to see the kind of life these people live, in order to understand their reality. In the novel, there are large glimpses of it in the section "The Night Chanter" where Ben narrates some portion of Abel's life. In the process, he also talks a



great deal about himself, unconsciously revealing his reasons for choosing such a life, its agonies and his own mental state and attitude towards the Pan-Indian concept as preached by Tosamah.

The Pan-Indians in the novel meet regularly at the Silver Dollar Inn. "It's a pretty good place," we are told, "there's a juke box, and there's always some Indians, drinking and fooling around. You can get drunk in there, and as long as you don't get sick or start a fight or something, nobody says anything" (p. 129).

Ben, however, says this a little too early, for in the very next line he mentions the role of the white policeman, Martinez, known as culebra, who is constantly looking for trouble. "He is a cop, and a bad one," Ben informs. It is not he who should behave but the Indians, for "if you behave yourself in there, he lets you alone." But Ben also knows that the culebra, which means a snake, does not look for any excuses. Being a sadist, he beats Indians whenever he feels like it.

Ben and his friends often assemble at the Silver Dollar Inn where they get drunk and indulge in meaningless sex. As Ben reports, Henry, Howard, Tosamah and Cruz "were all having a big time together." Ben is envious of Manygoats who brings a girl who is not only good looking but has big breasts.

At the Indian Center in Los Angeles matters are as bleak and even more frivolous. The unlighted building is used as a whore-house. Since the building has no toilets it stinks terribly. It makes people sick yet "somebody's always bringing a girl in there to fool around."

Ben, however, tries to rationalize matters and convince himself of the happy life he is leading in Los Angeles. One only has to see his comments:

On Land: It's a good place to live. There's always a lot going on, a lot of things to do and see once you find your way around. Once you find your way around you wonder how you ever got along out there where you came from. There's nothing there, you know, just the land, and the land is empty and dead. Everything is here, everything you ever want (p. 164).

On Life: You never have to be alone. You go downtown and there are a lot of people all around, and they're having a good time. You see how it is with them, how they get along and have money and nice things, radios and cars and clothes and big houses. And you want those things; you'd be crazy not to want them. And you can have them, too; they're so easy to have (p. 164).

On People: The people are real friendly most of the time, and they're always ready to help you out . . . they go out of their way to be nice . . . . It's like they want you to get along, like they're looking out for you (p. 164).

On Relocation People: The Relocation people are all right too. It's not like Tosamah says. They know how it is when you first come . . . they get you a job and a place to stay; I guess they even take care of you if you get sick. You don't have to worry about a thing (pp. 164-165).

Ben wants us to believe that life in Los Angeles is so simple and happy. Ironically, he has realized that this happy life demands a high price: "You've got to put a lot of things out of your mind . . . just forget about who you are" (p. 144). In other words, happiness and comfort demand total assimilation into American way of life. If the Indians want to survive in the white man's world they should simply forget

their Indian past, lose their identities and re-orient their lifestyles in order to get "used to" the American life.

However hard Ben might convince himself or others about the advantages of living a white man's life, it is he who ultimately falls back upon the healing power of words, in an attempt to cure Abel. Thus in spite of his apparent faith in the white values, Ben resorts to Indian medicine as he chants the Navajo ceremonial chants which lay stress on beauty and wholeness. These ideas are present in the two chants that Ben sings—"House made of dawn" and "I am the Turquoise Woman's son." The powerful pull of land and nature full of "dark clouds," "abundant showers," "male and female rain," "abundant plants" and "trail of pollen" draws him to his tribal past. In the finer analysis he is, like others, the son of the Turquoise Woman.

Similarly, despite all his claims to acculturation and Pan-Indianism, Tosamah's heart lies in his ancient past. Thus, he might prefer to be the Rev. John, but he is also the Big Bluff, "the son of the Hummingbird" and "the Priest of the Sun." He might mock at Abel's dilemma or make fun of his trial, but at the same time he very perceptively points out the non-identity of the Indians in the eyes of the U.S. Law as he quotes "What's-His-Name vs. U.S." There are shades of irony and sarcasm in his specious humour as he talks about the white man's world. Tosamah, in fact, relishes his tongue-in-cheek humour as he makes digs at the white man's ways. Ben, however, is unable to see through the satire and

dismisses everything by saying that Tosamah "doesn't understand" but merely talks big.

Consequently, it is difficult to agree with Professor Vernon Lattin's assessment of Tosamah. According to her Tosamah is unable to understand the full impact of the world around him since for him everything is a part of a "Jesus scheme." It is, however, a measure of Momaday's art and Tosamah's complexity (which Lattin admits) that they succeed in hoodwinking the readers who like Ben, believe that Tosamah merely talks. Tosamah knows that he is a sham. Ben is unable to see through the satire and dark humour of Tosamah, and therefore dismisses him by saying he "doesn't understand." Thus to compare Tosamah's vision with Fr. Olgin and call it "limited," as Lattin does, is certainly a harsh judgement.<sup>23</sup>

The truth, however, is that Tosamah is fully aware of the reality that surrounds the Indians. He might sermonize on "The Gospel According to John" (the pun could not be unintentional) but changes his stand by inserting very glibly: "Now brothers and sisters, old John was a white man, and the white man has his ways. . . . He adds and divides and multiplies the word. And in all of this he substracts the Truth" (p. 87).

Tosamah shrewdly exposes the hypocrisy of the white man, and, in contrast, highlights the sanctity of the word for the Indian by introducing his grandmother's respect and regard for words. Within the same framework he shows how the whites have taken the word for granted, and in the process diluted and disregarded it.

Tosamah's heart, too, lies in his land and with his people. He carefully shepherds his congregation from Christian myths to Indian and Kiowa myths, as seen in the story of the spirited survival of his grandmother and the story of Tai-me and the concluding sermon on "The Way to Rainy Mountain." He finds himself at ease and at his best in the role of the Son of Hummingbird, the Priest of the Sun, with his paraphernalia which includes fancy pheasant feathers, drumsticks, a smoke stick bearing the sacred water bird symbol, an eagle-bone whistle and finally the peyote buttons. It is during such sessions that the reality surfaces, because the wills of these Indians are no more under their control, and they have dropped the mask of being happy in the white America. Their feelings, which are normally suppressed, surface. There is no fear of the law or Martinez. In such a state they articulate their inner fears and sense of insecurity by invoking their Great Spirit and asking her to be with them for

We gone crazy for you to be with us poor  
Indi'ns. We been bad long time 'go, just  
raise it hell an' kill each others all the  
time. . . . Help us! We been suffer like  
hell sometime now. . . . we want be frens  
with white mans. . . . I am sad because we  
die. . . . Our childrens are need your  
help pretty damn bad, Great Spirit. They  
don' have no respec' no more, you know?  
They are become lazy, no-good-for-nothing  
drunkerts. Thank you (p. 105).

In this delirious state Ben has the vision of the blue and purple horses and of a house made of dawn. He reminds Abel of the Indian way of life, of how things were, and comforts him that life would be good once again. He also expresses a desire for going "home" (reservation) some day.

In this way the problem of Abel's estrangement is the larger social problem afflicting the Indians who have reached a state from where it is difficult for them to retrace their steps since they truly belong to neither world. They might appear to be acculturated, yet in spirit they are still essentially Indians.

Abel is thus neither here nor there. His position can best be described as one of being in a state of limbo. Unable to become a part of Francisco's world, he spends sometime with the Pan-Indians after being released on parole. But his experiences are highly unsatisfying. The loneliness surrounding the lives of Milly, Ben and Carlozini upsets him, and he strongly feels the pull of the land.

As Allen puts it so aptly, Abel is "caught between two cultures" and such people are "inarticulate, almost paralyzed in their inability to direct their energies towards resolving what seems to them to be an insolvable conflict. Their lives are, as they see it, completely beyond their control and any hope of reconciling the oppositions they struggle with, within and outside, seems beyond their reach."<sup>24</sup>

THE WHITE WORLD:

Abel's dilemma involves him in a peculiar relationship with the white man. It is a love-hate relationship which is cyclic in nature. The two forces of love and hate are instrumental in shaping Abel's fate, since they bring him into contact with people like Angela, Albino and Milly who play vital roles in Abel's quest for a meaningful life.

Both Angela and Abel share some common characteristics. For example, both have come to Walatowa for a "cure" since they are "sick" in their own ways. Both have an element of hope since they feel Walatowa might offer them the cure they are looking for. They are brought closer because they share a sense of disillusionment and loneliness with their respective worlds and lives. While war has shattered Abel's faith, life in Los Angeles and with Dr. Martin, her husband, has disillusioned Angela. It thus becomes simpler and natural for Angela and Abel to identify with each other.

Angela's position with regard to Abel has been best summed up by Trimmer who suggests that Angela's name could be related to Los Angeles where Abel seeks relocation. She is further linked with Maria de Los Angeles Porcingula, and Our Lady of the Angels. These names are interchangeable with the names for the patroness of the Bahkyush tribe and the old witch whom Francisco loved. These multiple images attract Abel to Angela and she can thus be seen as somewhere between the American and the Indian world.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, Angela's position might apparently appear undefined, and to the casual reader she might seem to be walking in and out of the novel for no particular reason. But her ties with Abel are stronger and more meaningful.

The attraction felt by Angela towards Abel originally derives from her sense of boredom and vacuity in life. On his first visit to Angela's house, Abel had aroused vague desires in her. Now, as she returns from her sauna bath, she is only too willing to make love to Abel, who despite his

reticence, responds passionately. In this sexual act, Angela sees a kind of spiritual regeneration.<sup>26</sup> A desire to touch the soft muzzle of a bear had inflamed her a long time ago when she had noticed a bear drinking water. This unfulfilled desire finds its fulfilment in this sexual union with Abel, obvious in her identification of Abel with the bear as she reaches her climax: "And in that split second she thought again of the badger at the water, and the great bear, blue-black and blowing" (p. 62). In this context the name of the village—Walatowa, "the village of the bear"—appears significant. The act gains further significance because earlier she had been unable to see the distant vision of the Cochiti dancers whose eyes were "held upon some distant vision out of range . . . some reality she did not even know or suspect" (p. 38). This distant vision appears clear to her now as it rains heavily after she has been spiritually reborn following her union with Abel. As it rains heavily, "the clear after-vision of the rain . . . obliterated all the mean and myriad fears that had laid of her in the past" (p. 71).

Abel's love for Angela lies dormant in him although she disappears after Section I. In his delirious state in Los Angeles, he is reminded of her goodness and beauty. To him she is someone "special and good," someone who would help him get a job. Lying helpless and wounded on the sea beach he is again reminded of her love.

If Abel is attracted towards Angela, the white woman, he is repelled by the presence of the Albino, "the white man," with as much intensity. The Albino appears to be



symbolic of evil in the form of "white man." Before we go into a discussion of this hate relationship between him and Abel, it may be in order to establish the identity of the Albino. There appears to be some ambiguity regarding the identity of the Albino, who could either be a white man, or Albino born in 1875 as Trimmer suggests, or two different person altogether.

None of these views, however, is tenable. If the Albino were a white man he would surely be disqualified from participating in the Indian ceremony. He would have merely been an observer like Fr. Olgin and Angela. Further, the possibility that the Albino is an Indian cannot be ruled out since Fr. Nicholas' diary clearly establishes the incidence of albino births among the Indians.

Trimmer is wrong in suggesting that there is a confusion of dates by which the Albino is 71 years old, and in calling him Juan Reyes. The Albino is nowhere mentioned by this name. He is only referred to as "the white man." Trimmer's confusion arises from the fact that he calls him Juan Reyes (which he is not) and then links him with Juan Reyes' birth in 1875 and points out the disparity in age, since the Albino is quite youthful.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, the Albino seen at the feast of Santiago and the Albino who is killed later are one and the same since there are explicit references in this regard. In both the places he is referred to as the "white man" with "blue lips" and "black glasses" (pp. 43 and 81).

The Albino is thus to be seen at a symbolic level, something larger and more powerful than ordinary life; some kind of an evil force, a witch, or a "sawah." Abel also sees him as a snake, therefore a culebra. A stronger reference to the sense of evil surrounding him is hinted where his evil presence in the air is felt by Francisco (p. 64). The equation that arises thus is:

Albino = white  
Albino = evil  
White = evil

or

Albino = white  
White = evil  
Albino = evil

The whiteness of the Albino is symbolic of that aspect of the white man which is to be hated, or that which elicits hate. In an excellent study of the novel, Lawrence Evers offers valuable insights into the function and meaning of the Albino. According to him, the whiteness of the Albino transcends the evil that it represents. It is, in this sense, similar to Ishmael's perception of the whiteness of the whale in Herman Melville's Moby Dick, where the whiteness of the whale suggests emptiness and void of meaning in the world. Relating the Albino to the Cochiti dancers in House Made of Dawn, Evers says "The albino confronts Abel with his own lack of meaning, his own lack of place."<sup>28</sup> Consequently, Abel's act of killing the Albino is "a frustrated response to the whiteman and christianity."<sup>29</sup> This can be attributed to Abel's frustration at not being able to become a part of his traditional culture on the one hand and being unable to

get rid of the white influence within him on the other. Both these factors act as impediments in his attempts to return to his tribe. During his unsuccessful attempt at entering the old rhythm in the feast of Santiago and Porcingula, it is ironical to see Abel's progress being obstructed by no other than the "white man." At the same time, it is the white man who is unwilling to accept him as he is. As a result of the white man's value system, Abel, today, is in a miserable state. Thus, at a purely psychological level, he finds it unbearable to suffer defeat and humiliation at the hands of the "white man" during the feast. And unable to come to terms with the white man, he decides to kill this evil, present now in the white albino, which appears to be the root cause of his misery. In this sense, the killing takes a symbolic form. It should not be equated with murder.

At another level, Abel's killing of the Albino is another form of getting rid of the evil within him, of killing "that alien other which he cannot accept and integrate within his own psyche and which he perceives to be the source of his pain and terror."<sup>30</sup> Thus, the love he has for Angela is counterbalanced by his hatred towards the white man, by killing a part of himself which he no longer wants to have. "That that part should take the shape of a snake in his confused mind is horribly appropriate, given the long association of the Devil and the snake in the Christian tradition [cf. Fray Nicholas v] and the subsequent Puritan identification of the Native Americans as demonic snakes and witches in early American literature."<sup>31</sup>

This hate is again counterbalanced by the love Abel has for the white woman Milly in Los Angeles. Milly understands Abel from the very beginning with great ease. She is frank and free and always laughing. Whereas Angela was attracted towards Abel, it is Abel who feels drawn towards Milly—"He was not listening to her but wanting her, thinking of how to have her. And she knew what he was thinking . . . ." (p. 99). Abel finds it easy to love and identify himself with Milly because of the sense of loneliness that surrounds both of them. While Abel still nurses the wounds of his mother's and brother's deaths, Milly has still not got over the deaths of her father and child Carrie. Milly had always wanted to return the amount her father had paid for her studies but he died before she could repay him. The death of Carrie is a moving incident for Abel, because he juxtaposes the memory of Carrie with his memories of Vidal. The shadow of premature death is present in both the cases.

Milly develops an intelligent understanding of Abel's situation. Initially, she talks to him about army life and prison days, and uses her psychological tests on him. But once she realizes Abel's dislike for such conversations she changes her modus operandi. She becomes more sympathetic and gives in easily. She decides to find him a job with a bakery, just as Angela had promised him a job outside reservation life.

However, the love-hate-situation is again counterbalanced by Martinez, the symbolic white law, whose constant vigil along with other officers fills Abel with revulsion

and anger for "they wouldn't leave him alone," says Ben, and "I guess that got on his nerves after a while, . . . They were always warning him, you know? Telling him he had to stay out of trouble, or else he was going to wind up in prison again . . . they wouldn't let him forget about it you know" (pp. 143-44).

Martinez symbolizes the white law in its worst form. The constant beatings that Abel and Ben receive from his hands, for no specific reasons, indicate that he derives sadistic pleasure by torturing Indians. Abel thus sees in him the image of culebra (snake, evil) just as he had seen a similar image in the Albino. His reaction is no less strong this time, as Ben tells us "He was going to look out for culebra, he said; he was going to get even with culebra and I told him to go ahead, I didn't give a damn" (p. 166). Even Ben, it appears, finds Martinez insufferable.

Abel is so overcome by his emotions that he quits Ben's house in an attempt to "get even" with Martinez. He, however, returns after three days with swollen eyes and hands, a broken nose and blood all over his body. His condition is so serious that he has to be hospitalized. It is clear that in his attempt to settle scores with evil, he has been once again defeated. Lastly, discrimination against Indians is also seen in the form of law as represented by the white judge who fails to understand Abel's act and calls it "brutal" and "premeditated."

The conclusion from the above situations is that Abel's feelings of love and hate for the white man are due to the

ambiguous nature of his experiences in a cultural contact situation. It would be naive to assume that all whites are bad and unsympathetic just as all Indians are dumb and stupid. The situations clearly establish the dual point-of-view which is present in the American society. Abel is a victim who is caught between two views and the love and hate which he has to share with the core-culture causes unpleasantness and misery.

Abel represents the consciousness of the larger Indian community. The novel thus moves from the micro to the macro level and vice versa. It also indicates that unless issues are resolved at personal levels, it is difficult, if not impossible, to expect a solution for the entire community.

The above discussion has shown Abel's spirited attempts and resulting failures at entering the old rhythm of life. His failure to be a part of his people brings him into the vortex of a peculiar love-hate relationship with the whites, seen in his sexual union with Angela and Milly and the killing of the Albino. The injustice that is meted out to him by the law overshadows the love that he receives from personal relationships. All efforts to relocate him fail because he finds no acceptance of his personal and tribal dignity in the American society.

So far Abel's tragic curve closely follows Arthur Miller's notion of a tragic character "who is ready to lay down his life, if the need be, to secure his sense of personal dignity."<sup>32</sup> Abel has grappled with the power of the white man, and in his struggle he has literally been crushed.

His tragic situation is evident in the opening paragraph of Section II of the novel that has reference to a certain species of fish which are "among the most helpless creatures on the face of this earth" (p. 89). This idea is again touched upon when the narrative voice wonders why Abel should be thinking about this fish in particular. The answer, of course, is soon provided when the voice says, "The thought of it [meaningless spawning of the fish] filled him with sad lamentable longing and wonder" (p. 89), and a little later, "he had the sense that his whole body was shaking violently, tossing and whipping like a fish" (p. 115).

Obviously then, Abel is identifying his present state of helplessness and meaninglessness with the silver-sided fish, which are among the most helpless creatures on the face of this earth. Like them, he is lying helplessly on the sea-shore. Perhaps he is aware of the senseless violence which is wrecking his inner and outer worlds, and of the need to regain his lost world again. The archetypal and powerful symbol of the sea is representative of the agony and restlessness in him. That is why, repeatedly he thinks of the sea's "immense gray silence" and muses "forever is the sea."

At this moment of time Abel is undergoing a process of self-analysis through introspection. The cultural clash has brought about a questioning of life and its purpose. But Abel is a victim of memories which continue to haunt him. His mind thus appears confused. Images and scenes of past life are superimposed upon present memories. From the so-called "murder" six years ago and its trial, to the recent

love-making with Milly and the beatings he has received at the hands of Martinez—all form a mosaic of ecstasy and agony. Time and again there are references to his mangled and swollen body. Consequently, it is now that a sense of realization dawns on Abel that he had lost the very centre of his universe: "He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth was even now reeling on the edge of the void" (p. 96). Being conscious of his reality, all his efforts are now directed to regain the central point of his universe.

Abel thus begins afresh with an honest acknowledgement of his situation. It is as if he lays down all his cards on the table before he makes a move:

He tried to think where the trouble had begun, what the trouble was. There was trouble; he could admit that to himself, but he had no real insight into his situation. Maybe certainly that was the trouble; but he had no way of knowing it (p. 97).

This is where Ben comes to Abel's rescue. Ben decides to "cure" Abel's sickness by taking him down the memory lane and stopping by at cultural sign-boards. He begins by telling Abel "about those old ways, the stories and the songs, Beauty-way and Night Chant. I sang some of those things, and I told them what they meant, what I thought they were about" (p. 133).

Thus the cure begins:

Male deity!  
Your offering I make.  
I have prepared a smoke for you.  
Restore my feet for me,



Restore my legs for me,  
Restore my body for me,  
Restore my mind for me,  
Restore my voice for me.

This very day take out your spell for me (p. 134).

Commenting on the healing power of the Night Chant, and the above lines in particular, poet Linda Hogan writes:

This excerpt from the Night Chant allows the hearer to visualize each part of body being healed. It builds from the feet upward to the voice, or language ability. The purpose of describing health is to obtain health. This purpose is furthered by taking the patient on an imaginative journey and returning him restored to himself.<sup>33</sup>

To support her observation, Hogan cites a passage from Sam D. Gill, who says "The semantic structure of the prayer Navajo Ceremonials is identical to the effect the prayer seeks, the restoration of health."<sup>34</sup>

The chant thus appears highly meaningful and also symbolic. It is symbolic because it has strong undercurrents of the loss of Indian culture. The Indians are torn and shattered both physically and spiritually. Hence the desire for total restoration of body and soul. The chant also befits Abel's state. His legs, feet, hands and body are literally swollen. He feels he is inarticulate. For him thus a complete restoration of physical and spiritual self is essential. Also, Indians too, like Abel, are shattered in spirit. Christianity has failed to provide them the healing touch, and one is reminded of the factual observation of the narrative voice that at heart these people are still Indians in spite of 400 years of Christianity. Neither Fr. Olgin's sermons nor Tosamah's sardonic insights into the nature of Christianity can be of much use. Only a ritual or a ceremony

can restore to the Indians their lost heritage and unite their divided selves; only a journey like "The Way to Rainy Mountain" can appear meaningful. The Chant continues to project Abel's inner feelings. It also seeks beauty which he seems to have lost. For him the world appears alien while the land is unequivocal. The kind of land Abel and Ben are seeking is essentially what Momaday envisions when he says, "Landscapes tend to stand out in my memory. When I think back to a particular time in my life, I tend to see it in terms of its setting, the background in which it achieves for me a certain relief."<sup>35</sup> Such feelings are clearly evident as Ben narrates the experiences of his childhood days when "You could hear the wind and you were little . . . the floor was yellow and warm and you could put your hands in the dust and feel how warm it was" (p. 140). There appears to be a complete communion with the environment in the pages that follow. It is interesting to notice the recurrence of words which indicate the fusion of sensory perception with the environment. Ben points out that such an environment made him so happy that he sang to himself. His narrative includes those happy days that he had shared with his grandfather. Abel, too, has experienced similar moments of joy and happiness in his childhood with his grandfather. These moments are recalled later in the novel by Francisco as he lies on his death-bed.

In his role as the Night Chanter, Ben has been highly successful, although he does not realize this. The irony lies in the fact that Ben the healer remains unhealed. In

fact, if anything has happened to him, it has been a further deterioration of his own state. Abel's cure has stirred in Ben the consciousness of his own heritage. The change, however, has been very subtle because on the surface he appears not to have changed. He is unable to understand Abel's exit and rationalizes to himself about Abel's reasons for going back to the reservation. Almost defensively he justifies Abel's troubles, which, according to him, are due to the fact that Abel was a "long hair" and would not change. In the same vein he adds that one has to change in order to survive and that the reservation offers nothing except the empty land.

The truth, however, lies elsewhere. It is Abel's final decision to leave Los Angeles for good and return to the reservation life. In this sense, Ben's cure seems to have changed Abel's consciousness.

#### THE RETURN:

The final section aims at concluding Abel's journey in search of his lost world. He has managed to return to Walatowa even at the point of near breakdown because he is, in spirit, like the people of the Bahkyush tribe who in "their moment of deep hurt and humiliation thought of themselves as a people" (p. 19).

What is the nature of this return? Commenting on Fr. Olgin's sense of achievement, the narrative voice says, "he had come to terms with the town" (p. 174). Abel has a similar feeling on his second home coming when, sitting in his grandfather's house, he feels "he had been a part of

every day since his return" (p. 175). However, Abel fails to convince himself of his success, or derive that sense of satisfaction which Fr. Olgin has achieved—"not as happy (for he looked down upon that particular abstraction) but in some sense composed and at peace" (p. 174). Estrangement from the village still exists for him because the Indians do not consider Fr. Olgin to be a part of their community. However, such issues are "irrelevant to his central point of view" (p. 174) because his satisfaction lies in the fact that he has set an example of piety.

On the other hand, Abel, in spite of the realization within him, is still unable to communicate with his grandfather—"he could think of nothing to say" (p. 175). Francisco's incoherent utterances in Spanish and Towa "carried him nowhere," for he felt desperate as his body still ached from the beating he has received at the hands of Martinez. The feeling one gets is that he has given up; that his return to Walatowa is a result not of his faith in his cultural values, or the rise of racial consciousness, but of lack of choice; of reaching a cul-de-sac; of having to choose between two evils, the reservation being the lesser one.

However, this is not really so. The power of the word for the Indian has the healing force for "words were medicine; they were magic and invisible. They came from nothing into sound and meaning. They were beyond price; they could neither be bought nor sold" (p. 89). Therefore, the so-called incoherent utterances of Francisco are actually meaningful for Abel. His last words on the sixth

dawn—"ayempah? Ayempah" (What are you doing? What are you doing!) stir Abel. Francisco, the dying man who needs healing, becomes the healer taking over from where Ben had left. With Abel Ben had shared his personal experiences with his grandfather. Now, to remind Abel of his past, Francisco has taken the onus of becoming the chanter. This journey into the past is instrumental in regaining Abel's lost sense of place and personal dignity which have been washed away by the strong currents of acculturation.

Francisco, aware of the dying Indian culture, and realizing the need for preserving it, has passed on all the vital knowledge to his grandsons, available to the Indians through the powerful oral tradition. He seems to share Momaday's notion of the land: "I am inclined closely to associate events with physical dimensions in which they take place . . . my existence is indivisible with land."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, when his grandsons are old enough, Francisco takes them to the old Campo Santo from where the black mesa is visible for "they must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. They must know it as they know the shape of their hands, always by heart" (p. 177).

Francisco, in recalling the past memories, wants to remind Abel of the significant aspects of Indian life e.g. agriculture ("time to plant corns"), ceremonies ("the rooster race, six days ahead of the black bull"), tradition ("Listen," he said, "It is the race of the dead, and it happens here"), hunting ("he was hard on the track of the bear"), sexual maturity ("She was wild and on fire and she

opened her thighs and he came upon her suddenly and hard and deep"), profession ("the next year he healed a child who had been sick from birth") and finally of the spirit to face challenges ("like a fool he had taken up the bait. . . . And he held on to the shadow and ran beyond his pain") (pp. 177-88).

Abel feels the strong impact of these memories and of the meaningful past after having led a meaningless life for a number of years. His symbolic return to his cultural roots, then, is shown through two incidents. The first occurs at the death of his grandfather and the second follows the first immediately.

Francisco dies and it is Abel's duty to bury him. Although Abel has been brought up in the midst of Catholic influence, he decides to carry out Francisco's final rites in the Indian tradition. So instead of calling Fr. Olgin, he

drew the old man's head erect and laid water to the hair. He fashioned the long white hair in a queue and wound it around with yarn. He dressed the body in bright ceremonial colours . . . . from the rafters he took down the pouches of pollen and of meal, the sacred feathers and the ledger book. These, together with ears of colored corn, he placed at his grandfather's side after he had sprinkled meal in the four directions. He wrapped the body in a blanket (p. 189).

It is important to recall the death of Tomacita Fragua where Fr. Nicholas' anguish that "they had wound her in a blanket tight (p. 47) is now felt by Fr. Olgin who finds Francisco's body tightly wrapped in a blanket. Like Tamacita's family members, Abel too has performed Indian rituals with coloured corn, pollen and feathers (p. 189) thereby

defying Fr. Olgin. Like his predecessor, Fr. Nicholas, the only task left for Fr. Olgin, when he is called, is to bury Francisco's body.

The act of faith on Abel's part effectively indicates his return to his traditions and his decision not to abandon his traditional values for Christianity. In a way, he combines both, giving preference to the Indian tradition. And because the neglect of burial rituals can result in sickness or death since the ghost of the dead man is likely to return under such circumstances,<sup>37</sup> Abel decides to call Fr. Olgin and ask him to bury the dead before dawn. The failure of Christianity looms large in Fr. Olgin's cry—"I understand! Oh God!

I understand—I understand!" (p. 190). It is an epiphany for him which makes him realize that Indians are still Indians at heart and in spite of four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities, "and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting" (p. 56). The whole incident is reminiscent of Leslie Silko's short story "The Man to Send Rain Clouds,"<sup>38</sup> where a similar incident occurs. The Catholic priest is called only to act as a catalyst to hasten the departure of the dead man's spirit which will send rain clouds. This indicates, as Edith Blichsilver notes, that "The old ways have not been forgotten; only the necessary aspects of christianity have been accepted and a pragmatic approach taken to the new."<sup>39</sup> Abel's act of calling Fr. Olgin after the native rituals have been performed is therefore similar to Louise's in "The Man to Send Rain Clouds." For Abel, the approach he adopts does not entail

the loss of his ancient customs. At the same time, there is no harm in using Christianity as a catalytic agent.<sup>40</sup> This precisely appears to be Louise's motive too.

The second incident which symbolizes Abel's return is his final decision to become the dawn runner. He rubs ashes on his chest and arms, and waits with the dawn runners facing "the clear pool of eternity" (p. 191). And from the void emerges form; followed by a significant symbolic change in perception and vision, forming yet another epiphany as:

the void began to deepen and to change:  
pumice, and pearl, and mother-of-pearl,  
and the pale and brilliant blush of orange  
and of rose. And then the deep hanging  
rim ran with fire and the sudden cold  
flare of the dawn struck upon the arc, and  
the runners sprang away (p. 191).

Various interpretations have been given to the race by critics and, therefore, its significance is manifold. The multiple views which have emerged have guided critics in trying to understand the symbolic meaning that the race seems to hold. Textual evidence itself is manifold. In the first section "The Longhair," we are told "Francisco remembered the race for good hunting and harvest," i.e., of economic significance for the survival of the community since hunting and harvesting form the basis of Indian economy.

In the second section "The Priest of the Sun," the dawn runners in Abel's hallucinatory vision are "old men running after evil" and "the runners after evil ran as water runs deep in the channel . . . running after evil in the night" (p. 96).



In the final section, "The Dawn Runner," "it is "the race of the dead," (p. 186) recalls Francisco, as he reminds Abel of the past incidents which, as noticed earlier, form a meaningful collage for Abel.

Charles R. Larson sees Abel's return as a "reluctant return," basing his argument on the notion that the race is one "towards death, a kind of spiritual suicide, and not an act of renewal."<sup>41</sup> That is, Abel returns to Walatowa since that is the only choice left for him. If he has to die he'd rather die on his own land. An indepth analysis shows that it is a misleading conclusion, since it has not taken all the points into account as we shall discuss a little later.

There are other critics who argue that Abel's return is a spiritual rebirth.<sup>42</sup> This seems a more satisfactory explanation. Marion Hylton points out that "Abel is not only assuming the role as male survivor of his family, but also completing the final phase of his own spiritual healing. As he runs he becomes a part of the orderly continuum of inter-related events that constitute the Indian universe, Abel is the land, and he is of the land once more."<sup>43</sup>

It is to be noticed that all along Abel has identified the Albino with the white and the white with the evil and thereby the Albino with the evil. He has been challanged, humbled and humiliated by this evil during the feast of Santiago. He decides, therefore, to crush the evil in the albionic form, which for him, is a snake (culebra). Later, while recounting this incidence Ben reasons to himself (not Abel to Ben, as Hylton thinks) that "They must know that he

would kill the white man again, if he had the chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. A man kills such an enemy if he can (p. 95).

It is in this context that Abel's race, far from being a spiritual suicide, seems to be a kind of an assertion of his Indianness; of a feeling of rising racial consciousness; of having pursued evil once and continuing to do so till he joins that meaningful group in his community which forms an integral and vital part of Indian life:

They were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe. Meaning because of them. They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. (p. 96).

Abel's race can also be seen in the context of "good harvest and hunting," similar to the one Francisco ran in 1889, because there are sharp parallels between the two. These parallels seem to indicate that Abel and Francisco have the same purpose behind running. Thus, if Francisco's race is for good harvest and hunting, symbolic of fertility and life, Abel's race too should have similar implications. For example, Francisco ran on the wagon road, and Abel "got up and went hurriedly to the road and south of wagon road." Both of them have smeared their bodies with ash (pp. 11 and 190). Again, when Francisco ran "he could feel the sweat fly from his head and arms, though it was winter and the air was filled with snow" (p. 11). Abel too is running with as much

intensity "and a cold sweat broke out upon him" (p. 191) although it is winter (February) and there is snow all around. The running created a burning sensation in Francisco's throat just as Abel's breath "heaved with the pain of running," Francisco felt he would lose to Mariano, but did not give up and finally overtook him. Similarly, Abel falls on the snow, but soon gets up and continues to run. Finally, once Francisco had overtaken Mariano, "he could have gone on running, for no reason, for only the sake of running on," and Abel too feels much the same: "He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself and the land and the dawn appearing" (p. 191).

Thus, both the races appear to be in the same spirit and surely, Francisco in 1889 was nowhere embracing death in the form of spiritual suicide.

The race can also be seen merely as a race, something that is a part of the Indian cultural heritage. Abel simply picks up from where Francisco has left. In this manner the tradition continues. Viewed in this sense the race acquires a symbolic form, representing the continuation of a tradition. And since it is Abel who decides to continue it, it is his return, and not the race alone, which becomes symbolic. It is "both beginning and end."<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the final act very symbolically and meaningfully indicates the return of Abel to his ancient culture. Very succinctly put, he is "reunited with his individual, racial and religious self."<sup>45</sup>

Abel's return to Walatowa then completes a full circle.<sup>46</sup>

A reluctant return in the first section becomes a redemptive return in the final section.<sup>47</sup> Abel has lived through the duality of American experience. He has experienced the society's melting pot form and its pluralistic form as well. He has experienced the world of the white man and the world of the Pan-Indians. But he chooses neither. Instead, he decides to go his grandfather's way, thereby rightfully regaining his displaced sense of place and lost personal dignity. What is it that Abel realizes towards the end? Surely, that he has more to gain than lose by remaining essentially Indian in form and spirit. He is struck by his grandfather's urgency to preserve the Indian culture as Francisco utters "What are you doing Abel?" and of the need to preserve the Indian customs which were "old and true" and which could be lost. It is with all this in mind that Abel rubs ashes on his body and becomes "The Dawn Runner."

It is, therefore, hard to accept Larson's argument that Momaday's vision is bleak and "the American Indian might just as well beat his head against the wall." His statement that "there appears too little possibility even of simple endurance"<sup>48</sup> appears harsh in the light of our analysis. As Lattin says, Momaday creates "an optimistic fiction with the protagonist returning to wholeness and mythic vision and transcending the limitations of both society and time."<sup>49</sup> Similar views are articulated by Hogan who writes: "Combining the oral elements of word energy created by accumulation and release, imaginative journey, and visualization, Momaday

restores Abel to his place within the equilibrium of the universe. He assumes the traditional role of speaker as healer by permitting Abel and the reader to see the order of the universe." 50

Thus Abel survives hardship injustice, discrimination, anger, malice, frustration and even personal tragedy. Abel runs. The Indian, certainly, is not then a "vanishing breed," but a visible force to reckon with, evident in his awareness of his ethnic heritage.

CHAPTER III

FROM LONELINESS TO A WEDDING RING: WELCH'S  
WINTER IN THE BLOOD

The Sun will melt  
these icy snows  
But the eclipse today  
is my heart in prison

- Tony Long Wolf

FROM LONELINESS TO A WEDDING RING: WELCH'S  
WINTER IN THE BLOOD

In this chapter we will analyze the cultural conflict and ethnic consciousness in Winter in the Blood<sup>1</sup> by James Welch who is a Blackfeet-Gros Ventre Indian. The setting of the novel is the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana.<sup>2</sup> While there is no direct reference to it, the assumption is supported by the presence of satellite towns like Malta, Dodson, Harlem and Havre.

The novel shares a number of characteristics with Momaday's House Made of Dawn. The plots of both the novels follow similar patterns of disillusionment with and rejection of white culture and a symbolic return to Indian culture; the protagonists suffer from a "sickness" which goes beyond their physical being. Further, their situation is merely a micro-cosmic representation of the community's misery.

However, both in form and style, the two writers are distinct from each other. Momaday, for instance, uses a narrative style which makes use of the multiple points of view and liberal use of myths, legends and oral poetry. Welch, in sharp contrast, resorts to the first person narrative throughout, leaving no scope for other characters, except perhaps the narrator-protagonist, to realize themselves fully. The rambling narration, moving back and forth in time, ranges from the history of the Blackfeet tribe to the personal loss which engulfs the narrator. Compounded with this is the

dominant surrealism of Parts I and II. As a result, the ethnicity is manifest only implicitly and if the reader is not careful, he is most likely to miss its import.

It is a significant aspect of the novel that the narrator is nameless. As Alan R. Velie observes: "Like Ralph Ellison in Invisible Man, Welch chooses not to name his central character, which has the effect of making him an everyman figure."<sup>3</sup> But the term "everyman" should not be extended to include, as Velie does, "a white cowboy from rural Montana" whose "story would not be essentially different."<sup>4</sup> For the story is not just that of a cowboy. It deals with the gradual awareness of a rich cultural past, and the rise of ethnic consciousness in an Indian who, apart from a personal loss, is a victim of cultural contact and cultural conflict. Therefore, it would certainly be acceptable to generalize that the namelessness of the narrator is representative of those Indians who are estranged from their selves and their people, and are seeking an identity which they seem to have lost.

What Welch gives no name to his narrator is also significant from the American Indian point of view. For the Indians, names convey power, unlike the christian names. The Indian names "have a relationship to the Great Spirit. Each Indian name has a story behind it, a vision, a quest for dreams. We receive great gifts from the source of a name; it links us to nature, to animal nations. It gives power. You can lean on a name, get strength from it. It is a special name for you and you alone—not a Dick, George, Charles kind of thing."<sup>5</sup>



Apart from his namelessness, another important aspect of the narrator is the absence of virtually any physical description of him. There are only constant references to his injured knee which not only takes a symbolic form of the cultural handicap of the Indians, but also appears to be an obvious reminder of the Wounded Knee episode of 1890 in the history of the Indians' struggle against the whites.

With no name and no form as such, the narrator becomes a man without an identity, yet seeking one at the same time. The sense of being robbed of his identity is symbolically shown through the theft of his gun and electric shaver (the phallic symbols being obvious). In Welch's novel, the narrator is not too distant a cousin of Momaday's Abel. He is a thirty-two year old Blackfeet Indian to whom "nothing of any consequence" has happened since his adulthood. He now views his situation with an aloofness and a concern which borders on indifference and so "I was as distant from myself as the hawk from the moon" (p. 3) he says summing up his situation. The image of the distance becomes a powerful metaphor in the course of the novel because the narrator is not only distanced from himself, but also from the land and society in which he exists. "I was nothing to anybody" (p. 57), he candidly confesses. Even his mother and grandmother did not mean much for "none of them counted" (p. 2). When he sees his mother's name on an envelope, he feels the name "did not belong to the woman who was my mother" (p. 70). Similarly, Agnes, his girlfriend is merely a "fish for dinner." His general indifference towards everybody leads him far away in the realms of the self where he felt "no hatred, no love, no

guilt, no conscience, nothing but a distance that had grown through the years" (p. 3).

Thus his return from the town to the reservation, like Abel's, triggers within him emotions which are to stimulate hatred, love and guilt and to prick his conscience in order to bridge the distances which he feels so strongly about. His present return, he feels, is inevitable since he has run out of choices. But this is not merely his fate alone. It could be the fate of any "bar hopping derelict Indian." His life, like theirs, is a meaningless humdrum of senseless violence. At the very outset he is aware of the physical pain which is a result of a recent scuffle in a bar. Although he seems to be suffering from a mild form of amnesia, he can still remember "the white man" who "swore at his money his wife's breasts" and the narrator's hair (p. 3).

The narrator's cold and bitter attitude towards human beings is a result of his emotional sterility, which eventually leads to a symbolic impotence, reinforced, as will be shown later, by the theft of his gun and electric shaver. He has little or no desire to communicate meaningfully with anyone.

Deep within are set two kinds of distances which are responsible for his emotional frostbite. Critic Elaine Jahner talks about four kinds of distances. The first two—arising from land and self's incapacity to dream—are related directly to the self, since they are experienced by the self. The third kind is that which is felt by others (Mose, First Raise) due to the non-realization of their dreams. The fourth distance arises out of "learning" how to turn dreams into realities.<sup>6</sup>

In our understanding of the novel, however, there are only two kinds of distances for the narrator: They are the first and the second kinds of distances. All along the narrator had no dreams and hence no ideals. With the deaths of his father and brother he tries to understand their dreams, dream with them and he learns to translate their dreams into realities. Thus, the third distance which Jahner talks of is included as a part of the second distance that has been referred to in our thesis. Failure to understand other people's dreams is after all, a part of failure to dream on his own. In fact, the overcoming of self-alienation is largely a result of the realization and acceptance of this distance that has so clearly been singled out by Jahner.

The first distance is a result of the Indian's love for his land, which is absent in this case. "The country," he says, "had created a distance as deep as it was empty" (p. 4) The second is due to personal loss which is present now in the form of haunting memories of two winters. This loss has influenced and shaped his present destiny and personality. It includes the deaths of his father First Raise, for since then "nothing of any consequence had happened" to him (p. 28) and his brother Mose.

These two memories, as will be shown, have alienated him from himself, his people and the land. He is rightly aware that it is not the country alone which is responsible for creating this distance, but it is also his own self-alienation. Therefore, the indifference, coldness and the distance that he has acquired are as much internal as external.

The attempt throughout the course of the novel is at overcoming the distances created by the above-mentioned factors. The journey—for that becomes the leit motif in the novel—towards self and society becomes the "cure" for his "sickness," leading to a heightened sense of ethnic awareness in the discovery of his origins. This helps bridge the distance that he has perceived so acutely in the beginning. The motif of the journey is not confined to this novel alone, since, as seen in the preceding chapter, Abel's quest follows a similar pattern. The chapter following this also traces a similar journey which Tayo undertakes.

#### THE LAND:

The narrator, after many a return from town, realizes that the land was no more fecund and that landscape offers no emotional nourishment. He returns to his home on the reservation which promises nothing: a land which has no squalor and yet offers no happiness either. For him, as also for his grandfather Yellow Calf, "the world is cockeyed," "the earth is cockeyed," (p. 79) and the country he lives in is a "greedy stupid country." Consequently, as Don Kunz sees it, "The spacious and remote country with its seemingly timeless winters becomes both partial cause and metaphor of the emotional tenor of its inhabitants."<sup>7</sup>

Thus images of decay, sterility and death recur along the barren land. The novel opens with the decaying log cabin of the Earthboys. Later, near the main irrigation ditch there hangs a rotten wooden bridge with holes in its planks. The "muddy," "milky" river is so polluted that no fish seem to survive in it. The land is drought ridden for "I haven't seen such a poor land

since the flood" (p. 11), observes Lame Bull. The old grandmother, well past over a hundred years has "gone to seed" and "there is no fertilizer in her bones" (p. 12). Yellow Calf, although intelligent and wise, is old with fingers that appear as "papers, like the belly of a rattle snake" (p. 78). Not only is he old, but he is also supposed to have been dead. "Teresa says you're dead" (p. 76), the narrator informs him. The image that Yellow Calf has acquired is almost legendary that of a vampire ~~ghost's~~, for as he says, "Some call me Bat Man because they think I drink the blood of their cattle during the night" (p. 76). The narrator feels that Yellow Calf "moves like a ghost." Besides this, he is blind, and this appears to be a recent phenomenon as the narrator notes for, in 1936 he seemed to have had his eyesight.

Moving parallel to these images of old age and decay is the landscape's harshness, with much of its beauty passing off unnoticed.<sup>8</sup> Abel on his return was nostalgic about the land. The narrator, however, is confronted with the prairie hills, the little Rockies, which appear to him as "black and furry in the heat of the haze" (p. 4). He also talks of the country with burnt prairie, a blazing sun, pale green valley, the dirty "milky" water of the river polluted by the whites. The vegetation offers nothing except sage bush and old and dead white cottonwood trees. To add to the monotony of the landscape, the narrator finds numerous cracked gumbo flats. Even the white family, which gives him a lift, speaks of the countryside "as if it were dead, as if all life had become extinct" (p. 145). The road from Havre to the reservation

is littered randomly with either a shack or a busted corral, the landscape of the country is "unchanging" and the reservoirs around the reservation have very little water in them. In some cases it was brown due to rust and at another place it was barely three feet below the tip of the dam. The landscape in Welch's novel is in fact reminiscent of Native American poet Raymond Young's poems where the "landscape is filled with charred trees, half-dead animals, peeling faces isolated humans."<sup>9</sup>

Thus there is little in the land which is soothing. It fails to offer emotional nourishment to the mind, for the mind too has become an extension of the land. In the narrator's memory, the land is associated with bitter winters, arid summers and gloomy falls. There are constant references to winters which were cruel, cold, timeless and bitter. "We all felt the bite of winter in our bones," (p. 115) says he and talks of "bitter nights" and of days having a "bitter wind." The novel's action is in summer, yet all the vital memories are of winter, for obviously, the story is of "winter" in the blood. In the cold whiteness of the winter, the narrator finds his father frozen to death—an image which still hasn't thawed in his mind, just as the other powerful image of Mose's death in another winter. His grandmother narrates her tale of sorrow and strength, which too is set in winters. The history of the Blackfeet tribe also forms a part of the larger winter canvas. Thus, as Kunz perceptively puts it, "Because of the historical circumstances of his life, winter is the season that he associates with loss and in which he

himself is lost. Winter has brought not only lost family and feeling, but lost territory, lost power, lost ethnic heritage."<sup>10</sup>

However, it is not as if summers offer a better deal. He talks of summers which have a "heat that denied the regular change of seasons. . . . It seemed that the hot, fly-buzzing days would never break, that summer would last through the Christmas" (p. 115). If Mose and First Raise died in winters then his grandmother dies in the summer, as do Old Bird and the Spinster Cow. His present sordid experiences are a part of the drought ridden summer.

Fall, true to its nature, is not only gloomy, but also reminds him of the distance that he has so far felt and observed. Recollecting the fall preceding Mose's death, the narrator says that the alfalfa fields "turned black beneath a black that refused to rain . . . the black birds flocked up for their flight south" and stars that "did not give off light, so that one looked at them with the feeling that he might not be seeing them, but rather some obscure points of white that defied distance, were both years and inches from his nose" (p. 115).

Such is the landscape and the land which is of central importance to the Indian existence. Talking of the earth on which one lives, Momaday has remarked:

Once in his life, a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, the "remembered earth" is only a painful recollection for the narrator of Winter in the Blood. It does not provide him emotional nourishment. There are no beautyways, the land that he remembers is uninspiring and it alienates him so that he candidly, and with tragic undertones, confesses that "The country had created a distance as deep as it was empty."

However, the kind of relationship that Momaday talks of is present, to a certain degree, in Yellow Calf's communion with his surroundings, which offer a sharp contrast to the dry and barren landscape seen and remembered by the narrator. Yellow Calf's relationship with the land is, in fact, what the Indians would really cherish. Yellow Calf, the isolated Blackfeet who is actually the narrator's grandfather, lives away from society and yet does not feel alone, for "Who's alone?" he questions, "The deer come . . . When they whistle I whistle back" (p. 78). His rapport with nature enables him to "understand most of them," so that as the narrator quits Yellow Calf's cottage, he can see Yellow Calf "listening to two magpies argue" (p. 80).

Symbolic in this communion is the deep bond of unity that exists between the Native American and the environment. Thus, Yellow Calf alludes to "the days gone by" in his conversation with the deer who "talk a lot," and "They are not happy," he informs his grandson (P. 79). Obviously, the reference is to their unhappy state and the disturbed ecology, a result of the Native Americans' sense of dispossession at the hands of the white man, and the loss of a reciprocal relationship of which critic Geri Rhodes thus talks:



Briefly, reciprocity describes an I-Thou relationship, the dynamics of the web of life (not a static metaphor, but an actual description of what goes on person to person, person to animal, and person to tribe in American Indian culture), and includes such forms of interdependence as generosity, sharing hospitality, advice-giving, and kinship relationships.<sup>12</sup>

This loss of reciprocity is attributed to the changing times by Yellow Calf, who feels that things are not what they should be, and if anything they are in a bad shape. There is no direct reference to the whites but it is implicit. Changes occur due to acculturation, assimilation and other such factors. Since the instrument of change lies in the hands of the whites, the Indians are helpless. Thus, Yellow Calf laments that "Things change—things have changed. They are not happy" (p. 79). And the fate of the Indians living in a deterministic world of reservations is sealed: "We can't change anything. The deer only see the signs" (p. 80). In the case of the narrator, the changes due to cultural contact and cultural "superiority" have resulted in his estrangement from his environment and people and thereby a loss of ethnicity.

#### THE PEOPLE:

According to the narrator, "the people accepted and treated each other with distance" (p. 4), because the land not only created a distance which appeared unbridgeable, but also hardened the people who have internalized the nature of this land. Consequently, there is no reciprocity and meaning in human relationships. The narrator has no love left for anyone he knows either in his family or in his community. Everyone

living is, to him, at the same point in space and time, be it his mother, step-father or Raymond Long Knife the hired hand, his Cree girlfriend, or Marelene, a whore who is sympathetic towards him. The love he feels for Agnes is as shallow as his attachment to his mother. The relationship of Teresa and Lame Bull exists not because they love each other but because it serves their business interests. The narrator feels as little for Lame Bull as he does for a hired hand like Raymond Long Knife. In fact, both the son and the hired hand are paid equal wages of \$20 a day. People, then, exist in a world where social and personal relationships are separated by yawning distances of disinterestedness. Thus to say that "Much of the novel is also a celebration of life—of those brief but unforgettable moments that evoke a sense of transcendence"<sup>13</sup> is simply far-fetched. It is surprising how Larson concludes this on the basis of what he calls "warm relationship which exists amongst his [the narrator's] mother, his grandmother and Lame Bull." He further adds, "There is a sense of filial compatibility—of people in Teresa's family actually enjoying each others" presence, in spite of the tragedies of the past."<sup>14</sup> In fact, the relationships are anything but warm, else the narrator would not feel the distance. The "tragedies" Larson speaks of do not mean much to Lame Bull. Nor do they mean much to Teresa who has got used to the deaths of her husband (hence her second marriage) and Mose. These deaths are tragedies only for the narrator, who carries within him an uneasy conscience.

In such an environment, Teresa, fails to project herself in the archetypal image of a mother. At least her son fails to see it in her. For him she is simply "Teresa." He views her relationship with the Catholic priest with suspicion. He makes no bones about his own matter-of-fact-relationship with his mother, as he says, "Coming home to a mother and an old lady who was my grandmother. . . . For that matter none of them counted; not one meant anything to me" (p. 4). He very clearly states that his self-alienation had led him to have "no particular feelings towards his mother or grandmother."

In other words, for him, homecoming does not mean bridging the emotional or the physical distance which he so strongly feels. Home provides no relief to the monotony and morbidity of his existence. Teresa's house is not the home he would like to live in.

But he also realizes that the question of choice does not arise because he had little to choose from. The white man's town life offered meaninglessness in the form of senseless violence, sex and liquor. On the other hand, the reservation had failed to provide any hope. If anything, it reminded him of his father and brother. Besides, his mother was basically interested in farming. She had turned into a rich successful farmer with a business-like, practical attitude towards life and he could not expect anything out of her: "I never expected much from Teresa and I never got it. But neither did anyone else" (p. 27). This last part explains to him, from his point of view, why his father First Raise preferred to stay away and humour the white man

than spend time with his wife. What possibly brought him home was not his wife but his two sons for, "we meant something to him, although he would never say it. It was apparent that he enjoyed the way we grew up and learned to do things . . . He would never say it, though, and after Mose got killed, he never showed it" (p. 27).

The house that Teresa has built appears to be full of distances—between the husband and wife and the mother and children. These distances are as much emotional as physical. Symbolically, First Raise remained "in transit," never fully at home, but never leaving it altogether. Therefore, when Mose dies prematurely and tragically and is followed by the death of First Raise, Teresa fails to fill the void created by their deaths.

Yet Teresa should not be misunderstood. For most of the time our perspective gets coloured due to the narrator's subjectivity. Because of his own distance from his self and people around him, he fails to appreciate the subtle interplay of emotions expressed by others. Talking of Teresa, he says she is someone from whom he never expected anything. But that is his own bias. Teresa on her own acts as his conscience-keeper and very subtly, she acts as a medicine man to "cure" his "sickness." Teresa knows her son has a sick conscience. Her "sessions" with her son are so suffused with deep psychological insights that in effect they are like psychoanalytical sessions. But she handles them so deftly that even the narrator fails to realize Teresa's intentions. The first "session" takes place right

at the beginning when she decides to talk about Amos, the duckling who was smarter than his brethrens. Teresa is aware that no one knows how the duckling died. She, however, suspects that her son harbours some guilt in connection with his death ("perhaps to ease my guilt, if I still felt any" he muses) (p. 22). By letting him know that it was she, not First Raise or the boys, who killed Amos, she eases his conscience. This confession makes a deep impact on the narrator who attaches much significance to Teresa's acceptance of the blame:<sup>15</sup>

"No! The bobcat killed the big turkey," she said, then added quietly, as though Lame Bull might hear over the grinding of steel, as though Bird might hear over the sound of the bawling calf, as though the fish that were never in the river might hear: "I killed Amos" (pp. 23-24).

The narrator sees this confession as something very personal; something which is not to be shared outside the family; something which needs to be hushed amidst the "grinding noise of steel" and "the sound of the bawling calf"; a secret to be guarded even from non-existent entities like the fish.

While talking of Amos, Teresa makes a casual reference to First Raise and "you boys," i.e. Mose and the narrator. It is a kind of a suggestion indicating her willingness to talk things over with her son, so that whatever ambiguities and obscurities envelope the events can now be cleared. So perhaps unconsciously, the narrator's first question, after Teresa's confession, is regarding First Raise's constant absence from the house. Surprisingly, Teresa does not blame

First Raise. A little later when he accuses her of neglect, she reprimands him by saying, "He always accomplished what he set out to do" (p. 25). Teresa gives further credit to First Raise when she lets it be known that it was he who built the extra bed-room in the house. But although he was good, "he was a foolish man, a restless wanderer. There is bitterness in her voice as she tells this to her son and she looks for genuine assurance when she asks "Do you blame me?" (p. 26). First Raise was too much of an idealist for a practical woman like Teresa. And this has shaped her attitude to life now, symbolic in her marriage to Lane Bull, seven years her junior, yet one who can her "360 acres of hay land" and "2000 acres grazing lease," knowing that her son would be of little use. She confesses that she cannot understand him, but that is because her son never lets her know how he feels. For example, she still does not know why he left his job in Seattle.

Teresa is aware of her son's need to talk over and exorcize himself by thinking over his brother's death. She keeps referring to Mose off and on ("you boys" pp. 21, 82, 83). She reminds him: "You and your brother used<sup>to</sup> ride Bird down here for a swim—do you remember that?" and then adds, "Do you remember the day you boys got caught in that lightning storm?" (p. 82). The words strike the desired chord in the narrator, who is suddenly reminded of that fateful year: "the year Mose got killed." Hence it is she who sets the memory ball rolling that helps him get rid of his guilt regarding Mose's death.

It is Teresa again who seeks to provide direction to her drifting son. Castigating him for spending all his life time up in Seattle, "bar hopping with those other derelicts" (p. 27), and chiding him for his carelessness—"I see it's the knee supposed to heal by itself" (p. 27)—she demands to know about the absence of Agnes who is supposed to be his wife. Teresa's intentions are clear: she sees in him another drifter (like her supposed father—"the half-white drifter") and a wanderer, a restless, even a "foolish" man like First Raise. She wants to change him. This is true also because the narrator does not deny his love and liking for First Raise and so in Teresa's mind the images of the father and the son are juxtaposed, though she tells him: "You must have mixed him up with yourself" (p. 25). However, it is the narrator's limited vision, a vision turned myopic because of his earlier experiences, which has distanced him from everyone including Teresa. He has to make an attempt to see beyond his limited vision by taking off his emotional blinkers. This requires conscious efforts on his part. As we shall see later, it is through his conscious efforts that he will be able to get rid of the various guilts in him and transcend his mundane existence.

Coming back to the question of people accepting and treating each other with distance we find that his step-father Lame Bull is one such person. Once home, the narrator encounters his bawdy, prospective step-father, a "crafty" man of forty-seven, whose cynicism reminds one of Tosamah in House Made of Dawn. He is a hard-core "economist" who does

not believe in the concept of diminishing returns. Therefore, for his gains he is even willing to resort to violence, as seen in the Raymond Long Knife episode (p. 34), or indifference, obvious in his Dodson trip. He is oblivious of the rain soaking his stepson. While the narrator thinks he could be sitting in a submarine instead of a car, Lame Bull talks of "the rain and the effect it would have on the new growth of alfalfa" (p. 47).

In the same way, Ferdinand Horn and his wife often stop by for meaningless chats. It is interesting to note the meaningless monologues of these people as they talk to "one another." Characters speak like they would in an absurd play. Each is oblivious of the needs of the other. The resulting confusion leads to an utter lack of communication, which, in turn, leads to a lack of understanding and personal involvement, which is ultimately what distances people from each other. As Larson puts it so aptly, "Throughout the novel, people talk at each other, but rarely with one another".<sup>16</sup> For example, on his return from the town, the narrator asks his mother about his grandmother's welfare. Her first reaction is to ignore the remark—"Hot cereal and pudding" is what she replies, and then as an afterthought she adds,

"how would you expect her to be?"

"What, no radishes?"

My mother ignored me as she sliced the potatoes into thin wafers (p. 5).

Peeling potatoes and ignoring the son are done in the same stroke and with as little involvement.



Later, Lame Bull talks about his fight with Raymond Long Knife while Horn decides to talk about the narrator's Cree girlfriend. But when the narrator decides to discuss her, Horn switches over to Lame Bull's side and discusses Long Knife. They conclude nodding gravely at the floor! (p. 39). Thus, people mean little to him, just as for others, he is of little consequence.

#### THE WHITE WORLD:

The problem of the narrator is due to the fact that he exists in a world which is engulfed by two forces: white and Indian. However, both forces fail to provide him with strength and verve to survive. So although he exists, he virtually ceases to live.

For the narrator, it is the white men who are largely responsible for the alienation that exists between the land and its people as discussed earlier. It is they who are responsible for disturbing or even ruining the ecological balance of the reservation. Thus, industrialization, a core-sector of the white economy, comes to the neighbourhood in the form of the sugar beat factory. Although the factory had closed down around 1959, it has caused enough pollution in the river, making its water milky. And even today, seven years later, not only is the water still milky, but the authorities have also been unsuccessful in rehabilitating the fish which have simply vanished owing to the muck of the factory, which is dumped into the river.

Now the authorities who are responsible for the loss of environment of the fish are obviously the whites. And

very symbolically, the Indian life has been similarly disturbed by these white men. All efforts to rehabilitate the Indians, either by placing them on reservations or relocating them, have failed miserably. The Indians are like the fish who are unable to live when transplanted from their original environment. Despite white efforts to re-introduce the fish, the latter "refused even to die there. They simply vanished. The white men made tests; they stuck electric rods into the water; they scraped much from the bottom; they even collected bugs from the fields next to the river; they dumped other kinds of fish in the river. Nothing worked. The fish disappeared" (p. 9). The whites not only create new problems for the Indian, but also cannot solve them. Unable to provide answers they, like the men from the fish department, simply "disappeared."

The narrator holds a very poor opinion of the white men of Dodson who are "crafty." He is bitter about the Relocation officers—"those conniving devils who run the agency today" (p. 173). Their efforts smack of insincerity and selfishness as was evident in Tacoma, where the clinic officials, it appeared, were very fond of the narrator, until one day a white nurse "who hated the Indians" exposed the reality: the narrator was a tool in the hands of the authorities who used his ethnic background to extract grants to build an extra wing (p. 28).

This incident filled him with abhorrence for the Relocation agency and now he is angry and even hurt to realize that it is always "they" who claimed the credit of

finding missing Indians—First Raise in particular, and other derelict Indians in general—so that they could add to their personal gains in the form of some funds or even promotions. The painful memory of finding a frozen First Raise ten years ago in a borrow pit is still fresh in his memory for although "it was always 'they' who had found him, yet I had a memory as timeless as the blowing snow that we had found him ourselves, that we had gone searching . . ." (p. 25).

These white men often torture the "poor injuns" in the bars as well as on roads. In the opening chapter he remembers the brawl at the inn. The dominant image of the white man and his drunken wife loom large although he fails to remember what led to the brawl. But such fracas happens everyday with most Indians. For the white man the only good Indian is a dead one.<sup>17</sup> Just as Martinez enjoyed harassing the Indians in House Made of Dawn, the border guards in this novel "like to harass Indians. They can never figure out why an Indian should want to go to Canada" (p. 104)—a powerful illustration of the famous phrase: All men are equal, but some are more equal than others. Often, the narrator expresses his powerlessness in a world of "stalking white men" (pp. 65 and 135).

CHRISTIANITY:

However, his hatred for the whites is most explicit in his attitude towards Christianity which is best symbolized by the priest who lives in Harlem. He never appears in the novel, yet he strongly makes his presence felt. He is not a welcome figure for the narrator who dislikes the hypocrisy of the catholic priest which he so blantly exhibits: "a

because the narrator tears the letter but perhaps the priest wants to inform her of his posting to another reservation ("they are sending him to another parish . . . Idaho") (p. 153). The narrator, however, reacts sharply to the unopened letter "from the priest of Harlem, a perfectly white envelope with the name stamped in silver in the corner" (p. 48). Curiosity and jealousy induce him to keep the letter in his pocket instead of sending it to his mother. Although he has every intention of reading it, he forgets the letter (a defense mechanism), until he discovers it while searching for his toothbrush in his pockets. "The letter to Teresa" he says, seeing the crumpled envelope, "from the priest of Harlem" (p. 70). He resorts to yet another defense mechanism—that of refusing to recognize his mother: "The name did not belong to the woman who was my mother. It belonged to somebody I didn't know, somebody so far away that the picture on the stamp of a man I didn't recognize seemed familiar" (p. 70). It is apparent that the narrator's dislike for his mother partly arises from the suspicion he has in his mind concerning her affair with the priest. This distances him from her. Oedipal overtones are, thus, obvious.

There is, therefore, intense dislike and hate for the priest and the mother. The priest has no name which is symbolic of the priests on reservations. His dislike for him also manifests itself in the form of critical censure of the priest's handwriting which "was like a child's, both timid and bold, the letters big, solid, unreal" (p. 70). However, the real feelings surface soon as his intentions

become clear in his confession: "I wanted to read it, to see what a priest would have to say to a woman who was his friend." Suspicion takes the better of his curiosity as he says, "I had heard of priests having drinking partners, fishing partners, but never a woman partner." Finally, it is the Oedipal Complex which gets the better of suspicion—"I wanted to read it because his woman partner was my mother" (p. 70) (italics mine). And yet he does not want to face this reality because the abhorred truth would only distance him further from his mother. It is best not to know, or at least pretend not to know the truth and remain at a distance than know the truth and increase the distance. Therefore, he comes up with another defensive front: "But I did not want to see my mother's name inside the envelope, in a letter written by a white man who refused to bury Indians in their own plots, who refused to set foot on the reservation" (p. 70). He derives "vague" satisfaction after tearing up the letter—a satisfaction that neither he nor his mother would ever learn

the priest had to communicate. Ignorance, for him, is bliss.

The hatred for the priest continues to hurt the narrator, for in spite of having torn the letter, he has not fully forgotten him or forgiven him for his relationship with his mother. Thus, when the grandmother dies, he is eager to know whether the priest would be coming to the reservation or not. Knowing that he never comes, he gets a chance to hurt Teresa: "I don't think anybody I know is going to miss him" (p. 154), implying of course not even Teresa. He waits

for her reaction, hoping she would wince, but she remains unaffected. He rubs it in again, "At least nobody on this reservation [not even Teresa, that is] . . . maybe a few of his friends in Harlem." But he fails to evoke any response or agitation in Teresa. On the other hand, he notices a solemnity and even a striking similarity between Teresa and his dead grandmother.

In the final section, the narrator almost triumphantly points out the truth in his predictions, "The priest from Harlem, of course, couldn't make it" (p. 197). The nature of Christianity, as embedded in the Indian consciousness, remains unchanged throughout. It is Lame Bull who finally decides to enact, with comic absurdity, the role of the priest, thus displacing the priest out of Teresa's life both symbolically and literally.

The ambivalent nature of the priest's role clearly helps to explicate the narrator's attitude towards Christianity and the values of the white world. Even Lame Bull feels that the whites do not let the Indians rest in peace even in their death: "The fool priest and then the blood-sucker down at the funeral parlor" he mutters, referring to the expenses incurred on the grandmother's funeral and the stress caused to Teresa by the mercenary attitude of the whites.

But Christianity seems to have travelled farther than what has just been observed. Teresa, the narrator announces, is a Catholic, as her name clearly indicates. His father, who still had his roots in the Indian traditions, though he moved in a white man's world, was a mixture of "John" plus

"First Raise." Although we do not know the narrator's name, his brother had a Christian name Mose, and even the male duck, unlike other non-humans, has a christian name Amos. The narrator, however, seems to have **affiliations** with First Raise, Yellow Calf, Old Bird and his grandmother.<sup>18</sup> Teresa is the most christianized of the lot, reminding one of Auntie (though unlike her she is not ashamed of being an Indian) in Ceremony. Yet she decides to bury her mother in a fashion which is partly christian and partly Indian. She makes the dead body appear beautiful by sending it to the funeral parlor in town. The body, however, remains hidden under the shining orange coffin "so we never did find out what kind of make up job the undertaker had done on her" (p. 198), says her grandson. True to the Indian style, the coffin is not left in the city, but brought to the reservation to be buried in the family graveyard along with Mose and First Raise.

Teresa herself is dressed for the occasion in the white man's style—a black coat, black high heels and a black cupcake hat, a black net over her eyes and nose. She paints her lips bright red. She has also impressed upon her husband to dress up in the formal English manner. Lame Bull is dressed such that even the narrator admits he looked "seedy" besides him. The burial itself is largely Christian in nature, though it is reduced to a comic farce by Lame Bull, who addresses the craziest of "few words about our beloved relative and friend" ever said in literature. He begins on a frivolous note: "Here lies a simple woman . . . who devoted herself to . . . rocking . . . and not a bad word about anybody . . ."

and then adds "Not the best mother in the world . . . but a good mother notwithstanding . . . who never gave anybody any crap" (pp. 198- 99).

Even otherwise, the impact of the American culture seems to have influenced Teresa's family's life-style in general. This is obvious from the economic status of her household which is much above average. To begin with, she is a rich farmer. Her farms are highly mechanized with tractors, hired hands, a little John Dree jeep, and her house is well equipped. The old stove of First Raise has been replaced by an electric stove (p. 151). For their marriage, Lame Bull and Teresa go to Malta and Teresa returns with a "shimmery turquoise dress," while Lame Bull sports some fancy kind of boots with walking heels.

There are, however, instances in the novel which reveal the existence of certain Indian traits in Teresa's house. She resorts to holy water to cure the wounded knee of her son and gives him "a slice of potato" to cure his swollen eye. The grandmother enjoys her tobacco pipe and Teresa's emotional responses are largely Indian in nature. For example, she respects her elders' feelings. In telling her son that his "wife" was disliked by his grandmother, she makes it clear that the old woman certainly has more right than his newly acquired wife: "I think your grandmother deserves to be here more than your wife, don't you?" . And after all, his wife "belongs in town" (p. 28).

The Indian world itself has been corrupted by white influence. The whites are always causing trouble, and as



Horn puts it so aptly, "They get too damn tricky for their own good" (p. 37). Thus, most Indians, as seen in Malta and Dodson, crowd or hang around in bars like the Silver Dollar and the Gable and indulge in reckless violence, best exemplified in the two encounters the narrator has with Agnes' brother Dougie. The first time Dougie, a hustler, robs a drunk and doublecrosses the narrator who was a partner in the theft. Later on, the narrator feels uneasy at the thought of the drunk returning to his senses and taking revenge. To add to his uneasiness there is Agnes who informs him that her brother is on the look out for him, since he has intentions of beating the narrator. "The roof of my mouth went dry and my tongue came away from it with a clack" (p. 123), he says as he realizes the import of Agnes' statement. There is no real reason for the fight except that Dougie is equally uneasy at the thought that the narrator might be looking for him.

Violence being a part of an Indian's fate and existence, thus erupts unannounced. One cannot escape from it. So, as the narrator is about to be serious with Agnes, "Suddenly a hand grabbed [his] shoulder and whirled [him] around" (p. 125).

That the state of the all the Indians is the same as ever, and to an average white man one Indian is like another, can be seen in this generalization which is a result of the white man's analysis:

Reddish, choleric, erect  
Hair black, straight thick; Nostrils wide; Face  
freckled; Chin beardless  
Persevering, content, free  
Paints himself with skilful red lines  
Governed by customs

In contrast, white Europeans exhibited an easygoing, active, ingenious nature, wore tailored clothes and were governed by laws."19

This stereotyping is best symbolized by the "wanted posters" at the post office in Dodson which had "the same faces he had memorized so many years before. Only the names were different" (p. 41).

Caught between two cultures the narrator feels lost. A sense of dispossession and a feeling of helplessness overtake his spirits. The narrator feels he belongs to no one world in particular, "I was a stranger to both and both had beaten me" (p. 135), reminding once again of Abel's and Tayo's situations.

#### THE PRIVATE WORLD:

Shaping his destiny is the second experience which revolves around the deaths of the narrator's father and brother. Recalling his brother's death he says that he was still a "servant to the memory of [his] death (p. 45). Although he is referring here to the accidental death of Mose, accompanying this sorrow is also the death of his father. In fact, the narrator also feels guilty about the death of Amos, the duckling, who was killed by Teresa as a substitute for the Christmas turkey which in turn had been eaten by a bobcat (pp. 21-24).

Fortunately, the burden of this guilt is lifted quite early in the novel. That he actually felt uneasy about Amos' death, which was a result of carelessness on his part, is clear from his confession, "The day the ducks drowned remained fresh in my mind" (p. 22), just as he still cannot forget the day Mose and First Raise died. But he is afraid

to broach the question of who killed Amos. "It was a question I had not wanted to ask" (p. 23). But now it becomes clear that it was Teresa who killed Amos because the boys "had no stomach for it."

In this way, Teresa takes off the burden of guilt—"guilt if I still felt any" (p. 22)—he observes, yet it is obvious that he is relieved by the truth that is revealed to him.

However, it is the memory of his father and his brother which haunts him constantly. Although he likes to think of them, the scenes that he remembers are inevitably painful. His father's memory, for instance, often reminds him of what he stood for. His image is there in his .30-30 gun which, ironically, has been stolen by the narrator's girlfriend. Thus, in his attempt to recover the gun—his masculinity, his identity, juxtaposed with the image of his father—he symbolically recovers his heritage by the discovery of his Blackfeet ancestry.

First Raise, who earned his living by making white men laugh by telling them stories and repairing their machines, was a clever man: "Twenty dollars to kick a baler awake," he would say, "one dollar for the kick and nineteen for knowing where to kick (p. 10). In his life time he appeared to have been a legendary character: "It was said that when leaves turned, First Raise's yard was full of iron; when they fell the yard was full of leaves." A rather popular figure, he drank with the whites and yet "wasn't crafty like Lame Bull or the white men of Dodson" (p. 10).

The narrator is also haunted by his father's dream which remained unfulfilled during his time. First Raise dreamed of hunting elk, which was prohibited, in the Glacier Park. He saw this as a part of the Indian tradition and the whole idea appeared as a kind of a ritual: "The dream, the planning and preparation, were all part of a ritual" (p. 10). Yet he was aware of the inevitable results of his hunt—he would have to pay a penalty for it. Besides, First Raise's dream had an element of defiance and rebellion. Hunting, which formed not only a part of the lifestyle but also a ritual for the Indian, was banned by the whites. The act of prohibition is symbolic of the hypocrisy of the white attitude towards nature. After ruining the ecology of the reservation, seen in the milky water of the river on the reservation, and consequently the absence of the fish in it, the whites have prohibited hunting for the Indian. But it is the Indian, more than anyone else, who is conscious of the natural balance and sanctity of life. This is best seen in the ritual which surrounds the killing of an animal.

First Raise died one winter morning in 1956 when the temperature was minus thirty. ". . . he never made the trip," the narrator informs us. He was found frozen in a borrow pit, apparently drunk and on his way back from Dodson. He had perhaps got caught in a snow-storm. The narrator feels the pinch of the death of his father who was neither happy nor satisfied. Although the narrator tells Teresa that he does not blame her for his father's unhappiness, he holds her truly guilty of neglecting him.

Associated with First Raise's death is also the bitterness of that winter when his grave was dug: "With two bars and a fifth of whisky, we had struggled through three feet of frozen ground, chipping it like flakes off an arrowhead. By nightfall we still hadn't worked our way through the frost" (p. 157). Ten years later he finds the grave sunk into the ground and surrounded by weeds. Except for two meaningless white plastic flowers, the grave appears deserted.

Alive in the narrator's memory are those visits he took with his father to Yellow Calf's cabin. He did not know why his father took him, yet the memory is sharp in his mind. Now, as he discovers that Yellow Calf is his grandfather, he recollects why his father, who knew this secret all along, used to take flour sack and frozen deer meat for Yellow Calf.

However, the reason why First Raise's memory keeps floating in so often is that it is associated with the memory of Mose—those happy days he shared with Mose and that fateful day of his death. These two are somehow inseparable. But stronger still is the associated sense of guilt about Mose's accident, which is as much a wound in his consciousness as the physical injury on his knee. In fact, the injury in the knee is a result of that accident and constantly hurts him just as he feels tortured by the memory of the accident. The constant references to the pain also parallel another refrain:

Mose was fourteen.

I was twelve (pp. 83, 117 & 161).

which is a justification to the reader, and perhaps a rationalization to the self, that (a) after all, he was the younger of the two and (b) he still has neither forgotten nor forgiven

him. The memory of Mose, like Caesar's ghost, makes its presence felt even in Mose's absence. In fact it appears to be more real than the actual happenings in the novel.

The guilt of his helplessness in the accident is like the Albatross that hangs around the neck of the sailor in the Rime. Like him, the narrator too would find his salvation by getting rid of it. This is achieved by exorcizing himself through a rigorous process of introspection. This is essential because it is tied to his state of alienation and hence, ethnic consciousness. It is only when he overcomes his estrangement that he takes pride in his tribal past. Therefore, the narrator must consciously think about the events leading to Mose's death and should realize that he had no role in it. All along he has been trying to consciously avoid thinking about the episode: "Randolph Scott had plugged me dead with a memory I had tried to keep away" (p. 121).

However, "memory," as he confesses, "was more real than experience" (p. 28). So Mose's memory keeps surfacing in different shapes and at different times, sometimes in the form of fragments from the past life and sometimes in the form of Mose's mementoes, such as the two brown duck eggs, stamp albums, shell casings, a green metal soldier and a rusty jackknife. The narrator's memories are reminiscent of similar memories in House Made of Dawn, where Abel and Vidal share moments of happiness and excitement. Abel's rabbit hunt is similar to the narrator's hawk hunt.

His memories finally focus on the central event as we are told about the accident in which Mose was killed one

winter evening, twenty years ago. The day began with expectation and an initiation into the role of adults, having the solemnity of a ritual which is evident from statements such as: "First Raise woke us up at four in the morning," "First Raise cooked breakfast on the wood stove," "First Raise set the plates of food before us . . . dipped us each a glass of water . . .," "First Raise smiled," "First Raise got us each a cup of coffee and watched us drink," "First Raise watched us drink the coffee down, then stood," and "First Raise stood in the doorway up at the house and watched us ride out" (pp. 116-117).

What appeared to be a relatively easy task, for—"All we had to do was get them the cows through the gate, close it and push them back a ways, away from the highway" (p.162)—ended tragically, killing Mose and injuring the knee physically and wounding the consciousness of the narrator for years to come. It left behind a burden of guilt sitting "grave as stone" (his own self image) upon his sensitive mind so that he grew up with a guilty and an uneasy conscience. This, as has been said earlier, is the cause of his present state of emotional barrenness. Added to it is the memory of First Raise who too is dead.

What began as a ritual ended as a tragedy. There is tragic irony in Mose's statement a moment before his death, as he tells his brother "Well, I don't know about you, but I want to get home before dark" (p. 127). The narrator, in fact, seems to sense the presence of some portending evil for the dusk can "play tricks on you, when you think you can

see better than you actually can, or see things that aren't there. The time of day your eyes, ears, nose become confused, all become one gray blur in the brain" (p. 162). He seems to sense danger, yet does not know what it is. "It should have been easy" (pp. 161 & 162), for ironically, the disaster comes due to the proper training that has been imparted to the cow horse called Old Bird. Seeing a calf break from the herd, he leaps to chase him. This disturbs the rest of the herd Mose, riding behind, yells out a warning since he had seen the oncoming car from the other end. But as Bird continues to chase, the narrator "had no strength" to stop him and so he "clung to him" (p. 163) in helplessness.

This brief moment of helplessness juxtaposes with Mose's death as the narrator notices the "futile lurch" of the car as it applied brakes a little too late sending "the smaller figure flying slowly over the top of the car to land with the hush of a stuffed doll" (p. 163). The sight would have made anyone feel guilty. Therefore, to this day, even when he is thirty-two, not only does he hold himself somehow responsible, playing some unassigned role in the drama of Mose's death, but he also feels that Bird too has a part in it and is equally guilty. Towards the close of the novel, before absolving himself, he absolves Bird of his guilt. He then realizes, as he tries to convince his own self, that there are times when one has the spirit to act but one feels incapacitated for reasons beyond one's control.

Thus alienated from society and self following Mose's death, the narrator drifts into a world which has no meaning



and in which nothing matters. He becomes insouciant and all that he feels is an evergrowing distance between him and all that is around him, including himself. The loss of faith is reinforced by his sordid experiences of drinking, fornicating and drifting aimlessly, without any sense of direction and purpose in "a world of stalking white men." The Indian life offers "no bargain either" (p. 135). Consequently, he reaches a point where, like Abel, he needs to do some re-thinking. "There's nothing wrong with being an Indian" (p. 27), Teresa tells him. The narrator has not realized this, but in the course of his journey and in the process of his exorcism, a new awareness grows which makes him conscious of his rich Blackfeet heritage. This adds a new dimension to his existence.

However, before he fully realizes the significance of his meaningless existence, he continues to feel "I-was nothing to anybody" (p. 57). He thus feels very little for the relationships that come his way. Each appears to be more shallow and meaningless than the last. The only factor which is common in his relationship with women is inane sex. He decides to hunt for Agnes, not because he seriously wants her back—"I didn't want her back . . . so why should I want to find her (p. 99)—but because he feels dispossessed. Dispossessed not because she has walked out on him but for robbing him of his identity. This aimlessness and lack of direction surface when he finally encounters Agnes: "I wanted to be with her but I didn't move. I didn't know how to go to her." When he finally approaches her he is unsure of what

he wants out of her—"Do you think I came about the gun?" he questions her, "I couldn't even find a plug-in for that electric razor" (p. 122). Thus, he sits opposite her "expecting her to say something real" (p. 123) and notices with a concern he would have for a tadpole that "her teeth were green from the creme de menthe." When she does speak "something real" like "Have you missed me?" his answer is, "Where do you think he is?"—The "he" referring to her brother Dougie who wants to settle scores with him. This lack of communication and involvement is also present in his conversations with the Horn family as noticed earlier,

Ironically, by the time emotion and desire kindle within him, it is Agnes who turns cold. As she sits opposite him, the narrator has a realization of some kind of love that he suddenly feels for her: "In her black eyes," he says, "I could see the reason I had brought her home that time before. They held the promise of warm things, of a spirit that went beyond her miserable life of drinking and screwing and men like me" (p. 125). There is a sudden desire in him to belong to someone. Thus, feeling sad and lonely, he tells her that he is not happy. "Who is?" she responds in all frivolity. And before any further communication can take place, the narrator is rudely dragged out and beaten by Agnes' brother, Dougie.

Again, unsure of what he wants, the narrator goes to Harlem and Havre where he merely indulges in sex lacking any sense of reciprocity. Excited by Malvina's naked flesh, he can feel the lust stirring within him: "I started to reach for the dark hair between her thighs," he says. Yet in each

of the three attempts he makes, Malvina grunts "Beat it." The numbness in him ("my hands froze," "my groin froze") is symbolic of the lack of emotions and his longing for flesh is transitory: "I felt the desire dying in my crotch" (p. 93).

The next person to whom he makes love is Marlene, the nurse who had taken care of him after his encounter with Dougie. Earlier it was he who wanted to be loved and Agnes had spurned him; now the roles are reversed. He burrows deep into Marlene, kisses her "shook her, tickled her, kneaded her breasts" because "I wanted her to be alive" (p. 137). But when she says "Kiss my pussy," he slaps her hard across the face and sits "grave as a stone on her belly," watching her without any trace of emotion, "as though I were watching a bug floating motionless down an irrigation ditch, not yet dead, but having decided upon death" (p. 138).

Here is a classic example of a man who having realized a situation, lacks the spirit to act. He does little to prevent her decision of "having decided upon death." His indifference and detachment have a kind of yogic air about them: "I felt the kind of peace that comes over one when he is alone, when he no longer cares for warmth, or sunshine, or possessions, or even a woman's body, so yielding and powerful" (p. 138).

It is interesting to note, however, the narrator's fixation for anatomical details in women. In his conversation in the bar, for example, speaking of a wife who does not, as yet, exist, he says, "My wife has hips like that," "but she has smaller breasts." A little later he adds, "Pink nipples

are the best" (p. 60). He stares hard at the barmaid's breasts which were "not as large as he had thought; her white blouse was a little small, stretched tight across them, straining the button between them." This image haunts him in the coming days. The next day he feels uneasy about the barmaid, "a feeling almost of shame" overtakes him (p. 69). He sees no reason for it and tries to pass it off as a dream. However, the uneasiness persists. It is only much later that it becomes clear why he feels uneasy and somewhat ashamed. When he sees the barmaid later in Havre he recalls, "In my mind I saw the hotel room in Malta, the button between her breasts popping—she had come to my room" (p. 121). All along, then, he seems to have lusted for her, and made love to her, in his imagination. But her image seems to overlap with Teresa's in his dream the following day, where he sees "the gutted rainbow turn into the barmaid of the last night, screaming under the hands of the leering wanted men." The barmaid herself is seen as Teresa "who was crying out a series of warnings to the man who had torn up his airplane ticket." The leering men are lusting for Teresa, "commenting on the texture of her breasts and the width of her hips" (p. 62). This juxtaposition of the images of Teresa and the barmaid, and his own sexual hunger, accompanied by the notion he has about Teresa's character, fuse in the erotic and absurd dream. The guilty feeling he now has on seeing the barmaid is a reminder to him of the fact that he had all along at the sub-conscious level, lusted for Teresa. In the same dream there is still another image of a girl asking him to loosen

her. This turns into reality when Marlene pleads, "If only I could get loose" (p. 138), as he sits hard on her belly.

There are other instances also where his fixation for breasts surfaces. When he meets Malvina, he can see through her tight dress, "only the undersides of her breasts," which he reasons, "must have been large for they extended far back to a flat belly" (p. 89). To his satisfaction he does get a chance to have a good view of her breasts and even hold them: "Her breasts were very large, silky tipped with enormous brown nipples," he observes. "I leaned further and stroked the sides of her breast. I used my hand under it and weighed it, rolling between my finger tips" (p. 93). Not satiated, he has a quick glance at her while leaving the room and notices "her breasts spread like pudding beneath the sheets" (p. 93). Later his eyes travel far and wide as he observes the thighs of another girl with a red heart stitched on her panties (p. 100).

Noticing a familiar sight in Havre he manages to recognise it as the barmaid although she has her back to him. The credit does not go to his memory for recognizing people without seeing their faces, but to his logic: "Leg's can't look familiar, but hips—nice little twitch—it had to be the barmaid from Malta." He does not fail to notice that "her hips swelled under the jacket and tapered into long legs that also looked familiar" (p. 121). And all that he can think of her in connection with their sexual act is "the button between the breasts popping—she had come to my room."

As for Agnes, "the fish" he had brought home for dinner, he finds, "her thighs were long and silky. They were the best part of her" (pp. 123-24). Finally, there is Marlene who has narrow hips and "small" and "soft" breasts (p. 136). After slapping her and treating her like a whore, he leaves her devoid of emotion or passion. And yet he does not fail to notice that "The pillow covered her belly, her breasts studied the sheet. She had drawn her legs up so that the nipple was only inches from its object" (p. 139).

What is one to make out of this obsession and attitude? Surely, the narrator seems to view human relationships only as something uni-dimensional. What he looks for in women is not really companionship, warmth or understanding. In fact, he deserts every woman he meets, since his relationships are without any feelings. His responses to them are limited to their bodies. A woman for him is nothing more than a sexual object. Such perceptions are, perhaps, rarely found in Indian communities. Consequently, he fails to provide companionship to Agnes, warmth to Malvina and is unable to understand Marlene's feelings. These qualities are absent even in his relationship with Teresa. Now and then he feels a surge of genuine love, but it is as transitory as the passion that is aroused in him.<sup>20</sup>

The narrator, perhaps, is aware of this emotional bankruptcy in him, considering his realization that he is estranged from everyone including himself. He is surprised, as perhaps is the reader, at his own ambivalence towards human relationships. And that is why, as he leaves Havre, he is convinced that

he has had enough of this shallowness and the crisis has to be resolved:

I had had enough of Havre, enough of town, of walking home, hung over beaten up, or both. I had had enough of the people, the bars, tenders, the bars, the cars, the hotels, but mostly I had had enough of myself. I wanted to lose myself, to ditch these clothes, to outrun this burning sun, to stand beneath the clouds, and have my shadow erased, myself along with it (p. 141).

This is one of the clearest and the most concrete realizations of his reality that he can speak of. Of course, he has completed a full circle. In the beginning he had made a similar self-scrutiny, but it had led him nowhere. He was caught in a vicious cycle of realization and rejection so that it became difficult for him to get out of it. Now, with his present experiences of meaninglessness and self-destruction, he has realized what his reality is. He has been, as Teresa says, "barhopping with those other derelicts" (p. 27).

However, what is important is the fact that this sense of self-awareness, from the very first summing up, has been accompanied by the rise of ethnic awareness also. In spite of himself then, there are attempts on his part to understand more and more, this ethnicity in and around him.

With this background in mind, a background which vividly sums up his social and mental environment, we can now trace the presence and rise of ethnic consciousness in the narrator. Therefore, in order to trace the ethnic consciousness in the narrator, seen in his perception of and awareness of his racial past, we will begin from chapter one itself.

The ethnic awareness has either been lost or dissolved in the personal tragedy of the narrator, which involves the death of his father, First Raise, and the tragic death of his brother Mose. The uneasy conscience that he has been carrying for the last twenty years has robbed him of his identity as an individual existing in a rich ancient culture of human trust and understanding, of his racial heritage and pride. This has led to estrangement and loneliness within and without. In the course of his discovery of his people, the narrator not only comes to terms with the community he belongs to, but also learns to define his self, his locus standi in his tribe, achieving thus a sense of racial pride.

#### ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS:

The presence of ethnic awareness in him is symbolically presented in the first chapter itself, though it is not very obvious. On his way back home, he halts for a little while near the graves of the Earthboys. It is not for nothing that Welch makes his narrator stop here, for it is here that his racial past lies buried, both in the form of the dead Earthboys, and the borrow pit where First Raise had frozen to death. The narrator observes that the place is called the Earthboy place and traces the history of these people. He recounts that for the last twenty years no one has lived in the decaying log cabin. Yet the graves are reminders of a life that once existed. The whole place appears highly symbolic of the Indian reality, seen in the form of the decaying and dilapidated log cabin whose "roof had fallen in and the mud between the logs had fallen out in chunks, leaving a bare gray skeleton,



home only to mice and insects. Tumbleweeds, stark as bone, rocked in a hot wind against the west wall" (p. 3). Thus the cabin becomes a fitting symbol of the Indian world, in the subconsciousness of the narrator. Although he does not, as yet, possess a heightened sense of ethnic awareness which he is to acquire much later in the novel, he still feels for the Earthboys "who were gone." But the daughter, he remembers, had married a man from the Lodgepole, thus mixing with the American mainstream and so "she could be anywhere," thereby losing her distinct Indian identity. It would be difficult indeed to explain this memory of the Earthboys in any other light than ethnic awareness and a sense of racial past in the narrator.

Later, when he reaches home, he thinks of another Indian: Agnes, his Cree girlfriend. The Crees, an Indian tribe, were, by and large, hated by the Blackfeet tribe who regarded the Crees as insincere. They were seen as traitors, carried away in the spate of acculturation. They had been brought by the whites and now the Crees "were good only for the white men who came to slaughter Indians. Crees had served as scouts for the mounted soldiers and had learned to live like them, drink with them" (p. 41), recalls the narrator. These historical details have been passed down to him by his grandmother.

The grandmother, however, resents the Crees more than anything else, for "the [Cree] girls had opened their thighs to the Long Knives [whites]" and "The children of these unions were doubly cursed." Now she wants to "avenge those many sins committed by generations of Crees" (p. 41). The

narrator is impressed by the old woman's ardour for she appears such a helpless old thing with hands "small and black as a magpie's feet."<sup>21</sup> But it is with these small, fragile hands which will function as the claws of a bird, that she intends slitting Agnes' throat—either with a flint striker or a knife which she hides in her legging. Her courage and her intense hatred indeed appear admirable, considering her helplessness, for, "If the girl had thought that her life was in danger, she would have laughed to see my mother hold the tiny body over a bedpan, to hear the small tinkling of an old lady as she sighed with relief" (pp. 41-42).

This grandmother, who is Teresa's mother, functions like Abel's grandfather in Momaday's House Made of Dawn, dutifully telling the grandsons "many things, many stories from her early life" (p. 42). The narrator now recalls how he and his brother, like typical Indian children, would sit at the foot of her rocking chair while "she revealed a life we never knew, this woman who was our kith" (p. 42). (Italics mine). Notice that more than twenty years later he feels great pride in associating himself with the Blackfeet tribe.

These memories have little to do with his present life or even with the deaths of First Raise and Mose, except that they too had their roots here. Obviously, the narrator has been doing some kind of rethinking. He has been contemplating in terms of a return. Like Abel, he wants his return to be a redemptive return, a return to his ancient past. It has to come through symbolic actions and recollections of his original past. Under such circumstances, it is these racial

memories which are awakened in his consciousness. They have always been there perhaps, but the need to turn to them or to recall them was never felt so strongly. And now, although emotionless, he is bitter towards the race which has uprooted them, acculturated them.

The ethnic consciousness that is being aroused in him, is seen also in his recollections of the history of the Blackfeet tribe. Embedded in his memory, for "memory," he says at one place, "was more real than experience," is the story of his stepfather Standing Bear, a Blackfeet from the West of Plains, and his grandmother. Standing Bear, "a man of some renown, a man with many scars," marries the narrator's grandmother, who is his third wife. That Standing Bear has many scars on his face indicates his courageous and valiant nature which is highly respected in his community. The emphasis which the narrator lays on this detail indicates his sense of pride as he now associates himself with the Blackfeet tribe.

Fearing the attack of the whites, based on the prophecy of Fish, the medicine man, the narrator recalls how the Blackfeet had put up a brave front. They had abandoned their camps before the whites came. "According to our grandmother," says he, "two bands had come together at a campsite beside a snaking vein of water, flanked by a stand of Willow and lodgepole pines, that would become known as Little Badger" (p. 43). These camps were headed by Heavy Runner who went to Canada, and Standing Bear who entered Missouri via Little Badger, Birch Creek east of the Marias River till they reached north of Milk River Valley.

It was a cruel winter of death and starvation. Standing Bear died in a raid on another tribe called Gros Ventre.

Thus, a widow at the young age of twenty-two, the narrator's grandmother became a social outcast, and a belief that she carried bad medicine and sorcery led to her final ostracization. Now, with ethnic pride the grandson remembers the tribal beauty of his grandmother, which comes as a sharp contrast to the buxom beauties with golden thighs and broad hips that he encounters in the town these days: "She told us she had been a beautiful girl, slender with flawless brown skin and long hair greased and shiny as the wings of a raven . . . she possessed a dark beauty, a gift that the women envied" (p. 44).<sup>22</sup>

The narrator confesses his longing to be a part of the world of Standing Bear and his grandma, and often he has felt a yearning for it: "Naked beneath a single sheet, I thought of the many nights I had lain awake, listening to those coyotes, crickets, the old lady's night sounds and my own heart beat" (p. 44). And even now in his present state of estrangement, it is noteworthy that he recalls only those major and meaningful events which have left a deep impression on him. With this kind of troubled conscience, his recollections of his past heritage are indicative of the ethnic awareness within him. For in the course of the novel we notice that only the highly emotive and evocative memories, which have some meaning for him, surface strongly. Thus, along with the shadows of First Raise and Mose, he also lives in the penumbric

past. His thoughts are not mere random thoughts; they are with a purpose and for a cause.

It is surprising then how critics have missed the ethnic significance of these historical and personal details. While William Smith Jr., attributes the significance to "the central mystery of the novel,"<sup>23</sup> Geri Rhodes dismisses them in her otherwise perceptive analysis,<sup>24</sup> and Charles Larson ignores the episode altogether.<sup>25</sup> But these memories gain further significance due to the fact that the narrator not merely recalls the historical details, but also remembers vividly the various aspects of social life of the community to which they belong. Thus, the Native Americans' sensitivity to his environment, to feel the portending evil in the air, is recalled in Fish's reaction to the environment as he says, "now that seasons change there is smell of steel in the air." He also recalls how his grandmother "sang softly in his [Standing Bear's] ears." Of Standing Bear, he says with family pride, "He was good, gentle, and like his father a chief" (p. 42). The narrator is also conscious of the fact that his grandmother never mentioned "the half-breed drifter" who is his "real" grandfather, for she feared "the image of Standing Bear would die in him" (p. 44).

He also remembers with sharp clarity, the details of the winter night when

Fires dotted campsite, and in the middle, around a larger fire, men sat and talked and played stick game late into the night. A feast celebrated their coming together, and for three days the old lady, then a girl, wailed with women around the perimeter of

jogging hunters. When the men rested, she owl-danced and threw "snakes" with other girls. A dust cloud hung over the campsite until the early hours of the morning (p. 43).

Connected with this history is yet another significant detail: Standing Bear was not his real grandfather. What is disturbing to the narrator is that his actual grandfather is in reality, "a half-white drifter named Doogie" (p. 44)—a fact which becomes more painful considering the pride he now takes in his ancient past. Besides, Doogie and his grandmother were never really married. But what is even worse is whether Doogie was Teresa's real father or not: "The woman who had informed me made signs that he wasn't" (p. 45).

As we shall see later, this information is vital because the denouement will reveal to the narrator that his real grandfather is none other than the blind, venerable Blackfeet Indian Yellow Calf. This secret was known only to First Raise. That was the reason, the narrator concludes, why his father had brought him to meet Yellow Calf when he was a child.

Thus, the rise of ethnic consciousness now seems to tie up with the remaining strands. His association with the past has led him to discover in the course of events his true ancestry. It helps him define the centre of his disturbed universe. He feels deep admiration and respect for Yellow Calf who has helped bridge the distance between the narrator's past and present; who has made him a part of the rich Blackfeet heritage without the traces of white blood. He praises Yellow Calf's dedication to his widowed grandmother in moments when she needed someone; this union of the hunter and the widow, "an affair so solemn and secretive" (p.182)

Consequently, we see that racial pride runs deep into him as he becomes aware that "it was his blood in my veins" (p. 181).

This awareness brings to the narrator a desire to live meaningfully with the help of "the raw material" that the Blackfeet heritage offers him. Therefore, having accomplished the task of bridging the distance between the narrator and the world around him, ethnicity further leads him to overcome self-alienation, to fill the chasm that alienates him from within, a distance which he referred to as that between "the hawk and the moon" (p. 4).

On returning to the reservation from Havre, the narrator starts the process of change with a ritual bath. As he scrubs himself he distinguishes between the two worlds—the town and the reservation, the white and the Indian: "That was a different kind of a dirt—dust from the roads, chaff from the hay-fields—not the invisible kind that coats a man who has been to town" (p. 151). Music accompanies his feelings as he says, "It was good to be at home" (p. 151). These are statements which he makes with feeling and emotion. This is the first time when he speaks of his home and the Indian world in positive terms, and so "the weariness I had felt earlier had vanished from my bones." He "ditches" his old dirty clothes for a fresh pair. The chapter ends with the narrator establishing personal communion with nature and the surroundings. There is a perceptible urge for belonging and permanence in his homecoming: "Although I had been gone for a couple of days, a weariness had settled in my bones" (p. 150).

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Accompanying this change in his perspective is a distinct change in his attitude towards Teresa. "There was something different about her," he notices after his grandmother's burial, "solemnity had darkened her eyes. As she bent over the table, I saw, perhaps because my grandmother was gone, how much she had come to resemble the old lady" (p. 154). But this change that he notices in Teresa is largely a change in his own perception. He is now viewing things from a closer distance, since he has decided to bridge the distance he has felt so far.

The narrator now overcomes his self alienation with the absolution of his guilt associated with the death of Mose. Elaine Jahner seems to think it otherwise, for she argues, "The guilt does not seem to be connected with the circumstances of his brother's death, but rather with the hero's realization that he cannot understand the positive aspects of his brother's and father's approach to life."<sup>26</sup> She however, does not explain what she means by "positive aspects" and Mose's "zestful" approach to life. While one can perhaps understand the positive aspects of First Raise, there is little textual evidence to assume that Mose had a "zestful" approach to and "positive aspects" of life. Jahner refers to Mose's mementoes, but surely they are, for the narrator, merely "mementoes" which he preserves because they belong to someone whom he loved. Therefore, her argument sounds very weak and unconvincing. There is, on the other hand, sufficient textual evidence to show that the narrator's guilt is connected with Mose's death. In fact, he constantly



keeps returning to the central event of Mose's death around which the novel revolves. His own helplessness at that moment had got transformed into a psychological guilt, tormenting him to this day to the point of self-alienation. Eversince that day he has neither forgiven himself nor Bird the cow horse.

Bird, however, has recently been forgiven: "I absolve you of your burden," says he in an emotionally charged rationale. "You think I haven't noticed it. You don't show it . . . You figure you have hidden this burden well. You have. But don't think I haven't seen it in your eyes those days. . . . Those days your eyes tell me what you feel" (p. 166). And then, "No, don't think it was your fault—when that calf broke, you reacted as they trained you" (p. 168). The narrator could, in fact, be saying this not just to Bird alone but also to himself for the words are an externalization of his own feelings about himself. Yet there is no one who can help him, no one who is aware, he feels, of what he has carried within him all these years. Teresa's proddings have proved insufficient for what he needs ~~is~~ understanding and absolution in the manner in which he has absolved Bird. The outburst ~~is~~, therefore, more for himself than for anyone else. In the course of twenty years, he has drifted far from people and self, becoming a man who has distanced himself from his living present, and now lives far away in a world of past memories which are both his source of joy and sorrow, strength and weakness.

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So now with no one to console him but himself, he is left to be his own priest. He becomes both the priest and the confessor—"What use, I whispered, cried for no one in the world to hear, not even Bird, for no one but my soul, as though the words would rid it of the final burden of guilt . . ." (p. 168).

The absolution of the guilt is washed by the tears that accompany the last, the final image of the accident as he recalls one of the most moving and tragic scenes in the novel:

. . . I found myself a child again, the years shed as a snake sheds its skin, and I was standing over the awkward tangle of clothes and limbs. "What use, what use, what use . . ." and no one answered, not the body in the road, not the hawk in the sky or the beetle in the earth; no one answered. And the tears in the hot sun, in the wine, the dusk, the chilly wind of dusk, the sleet that began to fall as I knelt beside the body, the first sharp pain of my smashed knee, the sleet on my neck, the blood which dribbled from his nostrils, his mouth, the man who hurried back from his car, his terrible breath as he tried to wrestle me away from my brother's broken body (p. 168).

Yet, the last trial is still awaiting him, one which will finally convince him that there are certain aspects which are beyond man's control, certain happenings which, in spite of one's whole-hearted attempts, are beyond the comprehension and control of man.<sup>27</sup> This is realized in his spirited struggle to save the Spinster Cow. He feels "she had earned this fate by being stupid and now no one can help her" (p. 187). There is some external power which controls the order of life. It is seen here in the form of thunder

example. His marriage with Agnes implies that once united, the Crees would no more "open their thighs to the Long Knives," and so their future generations would no more be doubly crossed. This in effect would not produce "half-white drifters" like Doagie, who would further cause embarrassment and shame to future generations; who would not distance people from each other and their rich, ancient culture.

His final recognition of his roots is symbolized in his insistence that the grandmother be buried along with the rest of the Indians. Conscious of his ethnic background, which is a result of his new awareness, and aware of the Blackfeet customs, he would have liked to bury his grandmother's possessions along with her, "things that would have been buried with her in the old days" (p. 151). But, as he realizes, she had no possessions except her medicine pouch. He, therefore, throws the medicine pouch of the old woman in the grave. This symbolizes the burial of "bad medicine," for although the narrator called it "bad luck," Yellow Calf insisted that the grandmother "had brought them bad medicine" (p. 175). In fact, the grandmother herself held her beauty responsible for the "hard times" that the tribe was facing then. As Yellow Calf says, "we knew our medicine had gone bad. . . . that we were being punished for having left our home" (p. 174).

The narrator seems to have taken the cue from his tribe to return home. The tribe had been "punished" for leaving its home. Therefore, just as "The people resolved that as soon as spring came they would go home, soldiers

or not" (p. 174), the narrator too follows them home. His return, like Abel's, thus becomes a redemptive return—a return to his home and people, to his ethnic past and tradition. This is also seen in his rejection of the Christian priest's authority.

The burial of bad medicine and the return of the narrator to his ethnic heritage also symbolize the regeneration of life ("spring"), reinforced by the idea of his inter-tribal marriage which is again symbolic of Pan-Indianism (which is distinct from Tosamah's notion in House Made of Dawn).

Finally, it is Yellow Calf who sums up for him the symmetry of existence in terms of Indian values. There is a kind of hierarchy, where each object, be it living or non-living, has a position and a role. Things move in fixed orbits in time and space, and any attempt by man to change the natural flow is to disturb the life cycle. Perhaps indirectly he is pointing towards the white man, who is largely responsible for today's "generalized, moralistic mush,"<sup>29</sup> and for the "apple" Indians.<sup>30</sup>

Thus the narrator realizes that the deaths of Old Bird the horse, Spinster Cow, First Raise, Mose and grandmother are a part of the pattern. Each one has followed his own cycle of life and death. He has no part in it. The narrator realizes, as Welch put it, that "he is human if insignificant."<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, the novel ends with the burial of the dead; the purgation of the narrator, the rise of ethnic consciousness; the hope of regeneration and finally, the use

of tradition. The narrator's course follows the lines of the song he had heard in Havre:

From loneliness to a wedding ring  
I played an ace and I won a queen (p. 122).

## CHAPTER IV

### A PLACE MORE ANCIENT THAN EDEN: SILKO'S CEREMONY

I live, but I will not live forever.  
Mysterious moon, you only remain,  
Powerful sun, you alone remain,  
Wonderful earth, you remain forever.

- Crazy Dog Society Song  
Quoted in Kiowa Years

A PLACE MORE ANCIENT THAN EDEN: SILKO'S CEREMONY

In a report on the black soldier, Shirley A. Star et al note: "America is known for its compromises in the field of race relations: when an army was to be raised, Negroes were needed and were not excluded, but neither were they fully integrated or fully accepted." They further maintain that in spite of the improvement in the conditions of the negro soldiers, "tensions remained because gains fell short of goals."<sup>1</sup>

The same appears to be true in the case of the Native American soldier who has suffered a similar fate. This is especially true for the Indian soldiers such as Abel, Tayo, Emo, Harley, Pinkie and others that one comes across in the contemporary Native American fiction. These war veterans, denied integration into the white society once the war is over, become bitter and fragmented, and are unable to bring themselves together. The whites, they feel, make no pretence to hide their feelings towards the Indian war-veterans:

The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a sudden that man at the store waits on you until all the white people bought what they wanted. And the white lady at bus depot, she's real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change. You watch it slide across the counter at you, and you know. Goddamn it! You stupid sonofabitches! You know!<sup>2</sup>

In fact, these embittered Indians have realized the irony of their situation. They are articulating what Welch's narrator in Winter in the Blood felt: "this country . . . all of us

taken for a ride . . . This stupid country—"3 That it was not they, but the vested, selfish interest of America in them which was cared for, is painfully realized by Tayo as he remembers an old white woman who rolled down the window of her car and said, 'God bless you, God bless you,' but it was the uniform, not them she blessed" (p. 42).

Such feelings of loss and disappointment are present in all the Indian soldiers in Ceremony who are now war-veterans of World War II. Their mental and cultural dislocation is best symbolized by Tayo's confused and entangled psyche which is "like debris caught in a flood" (p. 5). Their sense of loss, of not belonging to either the white world or the Indian community, and the resulting estrangement are, indeed, responsible for their questioning of the existing values and of the need for cultural survival and personal salvation. The force of Silko's novel lies in the tension created by the awareness of cultural loss and the need to preserve this loss. Silko dramatizes the crisis which ensues when two cultures meet and fail to appreciate each other.

The irony of the Indian war-veterans situation lies in the fact that they have fought for a land which has already been taken away from them by the government. The absurdity of the situation is emphasized when, on their return from the war, they realize that they were victims of transient glory. For example, during the war, the government adopted a recruiting strategy which promised "everything" to its neglected minorities if they fought for America. "Now I know you boys love America as much as we do, but this is your big chance to show it," says



the army officer to the Indian youth who appear to be deeply impressed. But notice the sharp distinction that the white man makes between "you" and "we." His recruitment strategy is similar to an advertisement for a lottery which inevitably carries the your-big-chance-to-win-phrase.

An appeal of this kind is an excellent short-cut to become an integral part of the core-culture for those Indians who have nurtured the idea of acculturation and assimilation into the American society in the hope of a better future. The speech has the firm conviction of the cultural superiority that the white man harbours. It is therefore easy to understand why Rocky and others like him are an easy victim to such promises which never materialize. They have been fed upon a staple diet of acculturation at home and in school. In Rocky's case it is his mother who "wanted him to be a success. She could see what white people wanted in an Indian and she believed this was his only chance" (p. 53). Auntie's dream has been drilled so hard in Tayo that over the years it has also become his dream. By joining the army, Rocky would be eligible for "everything."

Similarly, Pinkie, Harley, Leroy and Emo too are attracted by the prospects of joining the army. They have always looked upon the white culture with some measure of awe and wonder. Unable to define themselves in a society which treats them with contempt, they eagerly grasp the first given opportunity to rub shoulders with the dominant group in the society. Army, or rather, the destructive and malevolent World War II,

desire and believe that "they belonged to America" and "wanted white people for their friends." The irony, however, lies in their inability to comprehend "that it was the white people who gave them that feeling and it was white people who took it away again when the war was over" (p. 44).

The rise in the social status of the Indians who join the army is best symbolized by the "cold beer and blonde cunt" (p. 43) which are now easily available to them. Further, fighting for America gives them a feeling of belonging to this mighty nation. But belonging is not to be confused with any sense of national pride. Rather, "Belonging was drinking and laughing with the platoon, dancing with blond women, buying drinks for buddies born in Cleveland Ohio" (p. 44). Army, therefore, elevates them temporarily to a social status on par with the whites. This is the first step towards what Milton Gordon designates as "Structural assimilation."<sup>4</sup> It allows free mixing with the core-culture at a social level. For the Indians, the uniform adds a touch of class. Consequently, the white women in general, and the blondes in particular, or so these war-veterans feel, are attracted towards the Indian soldiers "and then by God," as Emo puts it, "I was a U.S. Marine and they came crowding all around. All during the war they'd say to me, 'Hey soldier, you sure are handsome. All that black thick hair.' 'Dance with me,' the blond girl said" (p. 42).

The deprived Indians, living in the midst of the squalor on the reservation, are strongly attracted by the bars and juke boxes in Los Angeles, "all those streets and tall buildings"

and have the exalted sense of being one with this aspect of white life. It is, thus, with high hopes and dreams that the Indians volunteer to serve in the army. For sometime it appears as if it is a dream come true: "They never asked me if I was Indian; sold me as much beer as I could drink. I was a big spender then. Had my military pay. Double starch in my uniform and my boots shining so good" (p. 42). As in every situation, there is always a blond who is ever willing to sleep with the Indian soldiers.

At the surface level, the war seems to utilize the services of the American minorities to suit the needs of the nation in times of crisis. It is, for the Indians, a reward which is hastily withdrawn once the result is achieved. At a deeper level, however, the war becomes a powerful instrument of acculturation, symbolized in Harley's attitude towards beer, for, after the war he drinks like a fish and Tayo notices "maybe this was something different about him now" (p. 20). Harley has, thus, picked up a behavioral characteristic of the core-culture. The white doctors are unable to see beyond the surface reality and attribute the incidence of drinking among the Indians to the war (p. 55). What they fail to realize is that the cultural contact during the war is resulting in cultural change. Failing to attain the social equality the Indians had envisioned they are driven to drinking and violence. Ironically, the treatment prescribed is medical rather than sociological. Thus the very centre of the cure is off-centre.

However, it is for people like Tayo and Abel that the

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the stark reality of the Indians living in a dominant white society. Their consciousness represents the disturbances in the collective unconscious of their community. For what is happening within them is merely the tip of the societal ice berg, as will be shown later in the analysis. Because of their sensitivity, they sharply react to any disturbances, which appear in them in the form of "battle fatigue," estrangement, loneliness and other such crises. Since they represent a part of the larger whole, in their cure lies the salvation of the community. Accompanying this awareness is the rise of ethnic consciousness which had either died or ~~lain~~ dormant in them. They now become aware of the richness of their cultural past which instills in them a sense of dignity and pride, leading them to spiritual regeneration. They also realize that the white culture has failed to offer them anything in spite of its claim to equality and justice. Thus, the "melting pot" appears to have been a failure in that it does not offer what it had envisioned:

America is God's crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! . . . . Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians— (melting) into the crucible, with you all! God is making the American.

Israel Zangwill, however, emphasized only on "all the races of Europe," and thereby eliminating the non-Europeans who were or had already been settled in America. He thus offered a limited vision. But neither has the broader vision of Crèvecoeur been realized, which envisions "Individuals of all nations[are] melted into a new race of men."<sup>6</sup>

Tayo has thus reasons to feel bitter about the treatment meted out to the Indians, "for during the war Tayo learned about white women and Indian men" (p. 59), recalling the inverse situation in Gallup where the Indian women are fascinated by white men. The situation, however, is different in Gallup because the Indian women were the victims of cultural change. Therefore, if his mother strayed away it was because she was caught between the values of a "superior" and an "inferior" culture. The white women, on the other hand, desired Indian soldiers for different reasons. Partly because these men were different and partly because they were soldiers. This idea is iterated in the tale of an Indian who impersonates as Mattuchi and giving his "special look" to two girls, succeeds in sleeping with them (pp. 60-61). The Indian soldiers have a very generalized notion about the white women, who always appear to be too willing to sleep with them. But it is perhaps as generalized as that of the Indian women held by the whites. The Indian war-veterans in the novel have a queer logic regarding their fascination for the white women: "They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women" (p. 57).

Tayo does not willingly indulge in much of bar house fracas. He is dragged into it by his companions. His passiveness is in fact reminiscent of the detachment and the emptiness of Abel and Welch's narrator. Like Abel, Tayo is a war-veteran who is turning into a mental wreck. Another characteristic which Tayo shares with Abel is his inarticulate self: "'His words [Tayo's] are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound'" (p. 15). This is similar to Abel's

speechlessness: "Had he been able to say it, anything of his own language—even the commonplace formula of greeting 'Where are you going?'—which had no being without sound, no visible stance—would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb, silence was the older and better part of custom still—but inarticulate."<sup>7</sup> Tayo sees his invisible, inarticulate tongue as "dry and dead, the carcass of a tiny rodent" (p. 15).

Tayo's perception, about himself reveals his sense of formlessness and powerlessness:

For a long time he had been white smoke.  
He did not realize that until he left the  
hospital because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. . . . He inhabited  
a gray winter fog on a distant elk mountain  
where hunters are lost indefinitely and  
their own bones mark the boundaries (p. 14).

In such a state of formlessness, Tayo seems to have "drifted in colours of smoke." He feels he has no name or identity for, "it had been a long time since he had thought about having a name" (p. 16). This sense of namelessness is a characteristic which he shares with Welch's narrator. In both cases, although the protagonists have names, they seem to be unaware of the identity which arises out of having a name. Haunted by fearsome and gruesome memories of a personal tragedy and an impersonal war, Tayo finds solace in crying. Crying thus becomes symbolic of the need for rain in a spiritually arid consciousness. It also acts as a cathartic agent for his guilt. Finally, it comes as a natural result of the losses that he has suffered: "'He cries because they are dead and everything is dying'" (p. 15). Left with very little

to live for, Tayo cries "because he had to make up for what was left: the dim room, empty beds, and a March dust storm rattling the tin on the roof" (p. 33). His reality, then, is dim and bleak. For him the external darkness and the storms are merely the outward manifestations of his inner turbulent self.

Tayo's problem, like that of the narrator of Winter in the Blood, is two fold. He is, like him, guilt-ridden and a servant to the memory of the deaths of his half-brother Rocky, and of the symbolic death (disappearance) of the cattle of his uncle Josiah. These cattle were a part of Josiah's larger dream, somewhat reminiscent of First Raise's dream in Winter in the Blood. The point is that Tayo's uneasiness is a result of a new awareness that has been aroused in him as a result of his war experiences. He has become conscious of his ethnicity. At the same time, the loss of an ethnic dream is a painful realization of a larger loss of his people. In order to understand this complex relationship, we shall discuss in the following pages the effects of Rocky's death and the loss of the cattle, both indicative of the shattering of a dream.

Tayo's attachment to Rocky is as deep as Abel's to Vidal and that of the narrator's to Mose. Tayo and Rocky are cousins, though this never creates any kind of distance between the two. Rocky is the legitimate, full blooded Indian son of Thelma (Auntie) and Robert; a boy with a strong sense of identity and social respectability—factors which represent both the psychological and the sociological value systems so dominant in western society, and so highly valued in the perception of the self. By contrast, Tayo is the result of some hasty,

unholy union between a stranger with alien green eyes and a runaway Pueblo girl. His mother Laura, too, is in sharp contrast to the highly astute, moralistic and rigidly Christian woman Thelma, who is her sister.

Tayo's sufferings are thus largely a result of his mixed ancestry. His mother is representative of those Indians who have drifted far from their cultural environs as a result of cultural change. Laura has been virtually forced into prostitution in her vain attempt to gain social equality and acceptability in the white world. Burdened at a young age with the birth of Tayo, and unable to provide him with love and care, she leaves him in the charge of her sister, Auntie. The burden of keeping up the family name and reputation, which always seem to be at stake due to Tayo, Laura or Josiah—but never Auntie and Rocky—becomes Auntie's responsibility and theme song. She never loses a chance to remind herself and those around her, especially Tayo, of Laura's shame, of the sacrifices Auntie has made, of the shame she has hidden and the names she has salvaged: "Many years ago," we are told, "she had taken him Tayo to conceal the shame of her younger sister" (p. 30), and "she had a way of saying it, a tone of voice which bitterly told the story, and the disgrace she and her family had suffered" (p. 68). She wallows in self-pity and pride and is constantly on the look out for "a new struggle, another opportunity . . . which proved above all else, she was a Christian woman" (p. 31).

When it comes to dealing with Tayo, Auntie transforms herself into the archetypal stepmother. She adopts a private



language and signals which only Tayo can and is supposed to interpret. Thus, the slamming of pots and pans always indicate her angry moods (pp. 69 & 96). This agreement was, however, suspended in the presence of others "and she pretended to treat him the same as she treated Rocky, but they both knew it was only temporary" (p. 69). Her dislike for Tayo is so strong that she wanted him "to feel the distance" between Rocky and him.

Rocky, however, is made of different stuff in spite of his mother's dominant nature. Realising the game his mother was playing, he pretended to play up to it so that "the two little boys accepted the distance, but Rocky was never cruel to Tayo. He seemed to know that silence was reserved only for times when the three were alone together. They sensed the difference in her when old Grandma or Josiah was present, and they adjusted without hesitation, keeping their secret" (p. 69).

The result of this secret understanding was that Tayo and Auntie understood each other perfectly well for "he learned to listen to the undertones of her voice" (p. 70). And in spite of Auntie's attitude, Tayo's love for Rocky did not diminish. To Rocky, Tayo's mixed ancestry was never a barrier. He viewed him as his "brother" despite his mother who "could maintain a distance between Rocky, who was her pride, and this other unwanted child" (p. 68).

Although Auntie had given strict instructions to Tayo to stay home and help Robert with the farm management, he enlisted along with Rocky. The present sense of guilt, of the loss of Rocky, is a result of the unfulfilled promise he had made to

Auntie when the two left for the war: "I'll bring him back safe, you don't have to worry" (p. 76). This ironical moment in time will become a critical moment in the lives of Auntie and Tayo, a turning point for both of them. As far as Tayo can, with acute sensitivity read Auntie's thoughts at this moment, "he could feel that she was waiting for something to happen, but he knew that she always hoped that she always expected it to happen to him, not to Rocky" (p. 76). The irony of fate, however, leads to Tayo's survival and Rocky's death. Rocky's death signifies Auntie's defeat, for she had always looked upon Rocky as the only one who, apart from her, could redeem the family name and be a success in the white world. She, however, did not have similar hopes of Tayo, and therefore, was not happy when Tayo informed her of his intentions of going to the war along with Rocky. And now, not only was Tayo—"the unwanted child," "the other one"—back from the war but he was a cruel reminder of the death of Rocky and her dreams.

As Tayo lies sick at home, he is aware of the tragedy and irony surrounding his safe return and of the effect it would have on Auntie. The first major cause of his so-called "battle fatigue" is, then, the awareness of the loss and the associated feeling of helplessness, accompanied by a strong sense of guilt, as if he were responsible for Rocky's death.

Arising from the guilt of Rocky's death is another important factor which is the cause of Tayo's emotional upheaval. Because he could not save Rocky from dying and remained impotently helpless as Rocky lay dying, Tayo cursed the rain

which in the Phillipine jungles, "lay suspended in the air, choking their lungs as they marched on; it soaked into their boots until the skin on their toes peeled away dead and wounds turned green" (p. 11). Tayo was convinced that it was the rain which was accelerating the process of Rocky's death, and only if it would stop could anything concrete be done to save Rocky. But as the rain continued to pour, aggravating matters, Tayo, in his misdirected anger arising out of his own helplessness, cursed the rain "until the words were a chant, and he sang it. . . . He wanted the words to make a cloudless blue sky, pale with a summer sun" (p. 12).

The force of Tayo's curse is intensified since he uses it as a weapon against an adversary, thereby resorting to the Indian belief in the power of the word and the force of magic. While cursing might remain at the level of an expression of mere disgust in some cases, in the Indian culture it involves the invocation of a superior power, which could either be magical or demonic in nature. Rain, on the other hand, in many tribal cultures, and even in the archetypal patterns in human psyche, symbolizes fertility and regeneration. Tayo, in cursing the rain for purely selfish reasons and for a personal cause, acts against the community spirit. His curse has the added power of a chant, and as mentioned earlier, his anger is misdirected. In Navaho culture, errors in singing a chant may be followed by disease.<sup>8</sup> As Tayo curses the rain he is conscious of the implications of his act. Ironically, then, his cultural consciousness is aroused by his perception of the significance of the Second World War which, for him,

emerges as a symbol of degeneration and decadence in the white world. It stirs within him the racial memory, reminding him of the power of curses and chants as he hears "his own voice praying against the rain" (p. 12).

Tayo's curse not only fails to stopp the rain, but it is also unable to save Rocky. It, however, has its repercussions: it brings misery to his people which manifests itself in the form of drought. Thus, as Tayo notices the dry and barren land, hears about the death of Josiah before he could fulfil his dreams and of the disappearance of the cattle, he "could see the consequences of his praying" (p. 13). Tayo, thus, becomes aware of the larger pattern of the world in which things are interconnected and interrelated forming thereby a delicate structure of harmonies and balances. He becomes conscious of the fact that the Indian world is holistic in nature. It is, therefore, not just that his action is responsible for his community's misery, but also that it is his responsibility to set right the balance, and that in his cure lies the cure of his people.<sup>9</sup>

Tayo feels that his present misery is a result of his association with the white culture. Consequently, he feels guilt ridden to see that Josiah's cattle, which were Tayo's responsibility, have disappeared, and have probably been lost for good. The cattle gain further significance because they represent a reality which is the outcome of the Indians' disillusionment with the whites. Josiah had purchased them with great care after he had come to the firm conclusion that the whites suffered from acute shortsightedness when it came

to dealing with Indian problems. They wrote books without keeping in mind the problems faced by the Indians such as the "drought or winter blizzards or dry thistles, which the cattle had to live with" (p. 78). Josiah realizes that such books are not written for the Indians because the white man does not think that the Indian is capable or desirous of cross-breeding cattle. Breeding, after all, is the discovery of the "civilized man." Naturally, the "savage" might not ever care or be aware of it. Consequently, Josiah says with a sigh, "I guess we will have to get along without these books" (p. 78).

Josiah's dream of improving the breed for the Indians is seen in the title of his book which, as yet, did not exist: Cattle Raising on Indian Land. He intends cross-breeding his Herford cattle with the wild Mexican breed to produce a "don't-eat-grass or-drink-water variety."

Now, with the disappearance of the cattle, Tayo's sense of guilt is intensified. As it is, the cattle had been purchased by Josiah along with Tayo's help and Auntie's wrath. Tayo added to her anger and displeasure by enlisting along with Rocky. Now he is back sans Rocky, sans cattle. Hence his sense of guilt and sorrow. The ominous signs of the forthcoming tragedy were felt by Tayo during the war itself when he often confused the faces of the Japanese soldiers with that of Josiah. He thus had a premonition of Josiah's death as he saw, in the midst of the dying Japanese faces, the figure of his uncle smiling at him. No amount of logical reasoning could convince him that the dead man was a Japanese soldier "because it wasn't a Jap, it was Josiah . . ." (p. 7).

As he now lies in his bed, both spiritually and physically sick, Josiah's face and voice loom large before his eyes. Repeatedly he is reminded of the tragic loss of Rocky, Josiah and the cattle as they are "all scattered now, all lost, sucked away in the dissolution that had taken away everything from him" (p. 32).

#### THE COMMUNITY:

At the microlevel, Tayo's present situation is very much like Abel's, and in both cases the personal tragedies of the protagonists are symbolic of the larger social whole. The community of the Native Americans, as demonstrated in earlier chapters, has a close-knit structure in which the individuals are bound to one another in social as well as personal relationships. The community life is thus a holistic one. However, with changing times, there has been a distinct change in its structure. Cultural contacts and ensuing results like acculturation have weakened the core of tribal life, breaking the traditional patterns and structures. Families are no more cohesive and consequently, the traditional nuclear unit rarely exists. This changing, crumbling world in transition has been presented vividly by Silko. Her characters—Tayo, Rocky, Pinkie, Harley and others—are born and bred in such a world. Tempted by the values of the white society and ashamed of their tradition bound culture, they fall victims to the bright lights of the city and the glib talk of the missionaries with misdirected goals.

Tayo, like the rest of the Indians, is caught between two varied cultures. That he belongs to neither is to say

the least. A look at Tayo's world will indicate its sordidness. Ceremony is perhaps the first novel where the misery and squalor of the reservation life have been presented. For instance, Momaday shows us the richer aspects of the socio-cultural and religious life of the Jemez Indians. There is a section in House Made of Dawn where Fr. Olgin is shown to be passing through the town. Momaday takes this opportunity to present the Indian social life in some detail. But it is merely the surface reality that is described. In Winter in the Blood, the focus is on the loneliness and estrangement of the individual rather than the community life. Silko is dealing with yet another aspect. In depicting the life of the Indians living in Gallup town, she paints a dusty, morbid place, famous for its annual inter-tribal ceremonial events. Unlike Momaday, she does not utilize this aspect to highlight the richness of the culture which is done through the ceremony itself. What arrests her immediate attention is the Gallup underworld of pimps, prostitutes and lecherous white men and of under-nourished and lonely children. Through Tayo's consciousness, Silko effectively shows that the different Indian tribes seem to be sharing a similar fate.

Thus, there are the Navajos in their torn and tattered jackets, loitering around the bars, accompanied by the Hopis, the Zunis, the Lagunas—"all of them slouched down against the dirty walls of the bars along the Highway 66, their eyes staring at the ground as if they had forgotten the sun in the sky . . . crouching outside bars like cold flies stuck to the wall" (p. 112).

In other words, Silko points out that the Native American tribes are actually varied in nature. However, they seem to share a common destiny and a common fate due to the historicity of their situation. It should be pointed out that the fate of the Indians is, in fact, bound together like that of the European immigrants who are labelled as "whites," though they too, like the Indian tribes, are distinct and varied in many respects. But the term "white" stands for all that is European and non-Indian, just as the term "Indian" encompasses within its fold all that is non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon.

The Indians who live together and share a common fate reinforce the stereotype image of the "good-for-nothing," "lazy," "drunken" Indian. Here they are seen with their "feet, toes poking through the holes in the socks. Someone sleeping off the night before but without his boots now, because somebody had taken them to trade for a bottle of cheap wine" (p. 112). Aware of the discrimination they face at the hands of the white laws in the city, a place full of "stalking white men," to use the narrator's image in Winter in the Blood, these Indians do not stay back in town after night for "the safest way was to avoid dark places in the night" (p. 113).

This is the fate of an average Indian—a fate which, like the very bars they frequent, does not change. The bars continue to remain dirty, smoky and stink of urine and vomit. They are bleak and dim. On seeing the "dim soil light" in the bars, Tayo recalls the colour of light he had once seen, "but he had never been sure if it was the light



or the beer he was drinking" (p. 51). Most of the day is spent frequenting these bars.

What is the etiology of this misery and darkness that envelopes the life of an average Indian? Their lives have become meaningless and insecure. The oppressive nature of such an atmosphere becomes unbearable for sensitive men like Tayo, who start questioning the world they live in.

In order to find an answer to the question above, we will have to analyse the Indian world. To begin with, it is the atmosphere of Gallup town—to localize the cause—which is largely responsible for their condition. Gallup, which is "kind of interesting," "even funny," is the white man's source of joy and exploitation. In the Indians extinction lies his curiosity, in their survival lies his fun. The result of this rather odd equation is the expansion of tourism. Thus, it is here that the whites can stop by to see the Indians, collect souvenirs, and watch the Indian dances. During the Ceremonial Events, the whites open shops and exploit both the Indians and the whites.

In the ceremonies that follow there is no display of cultural splendour or traditional custom. Rather, it is an exhibition of the last of the savages, the remnants of a vanishing tribe which has been reduced to a mere anthropological as well as a tourist curiosity. The whites now view them without any traces of human acceptance and love. As Silko informs us:

The Gallup Ceremonial had been an annual event for a long time. It was good for the tourist business. . . . They liked to see Indians and Indian dances; they wanted a

chance to buy Indian jewelry and Navajo rugs. Every year it was organized by the white men. . . . Dance groups from the Pueblos were paid to come; they got Plains hoop dancers, and flying-pole dancers from northern Mexico. They organized an all-Indian rodeo and horse races (pp. 121-22).

Thus, the Indian culture has been reduced by the white men to a saleable commodity. Ironically, the Indians themselves are seen selling their own culture in order to eke out a living. The community dances which were once meaningful rituals invoking various supernatural forces, are now "organized by the white men." The Indian culture is dying and degeneration has set in because Indians are now hired "professionals" who are "paid to come." The dances have lost their meaning and power. There appears to be little feeling of harmony in the community because the dances that are now being performed are not part of a ritual but an item of a cultural bargain for the sake of the white man's pleasure and curiosity. There is no pulsating community life because the dances are performed not in a spirit of the community's organic growth in terms of wholeness and beauty but in a spirit of unhealthy competition. Consequently, the ceremonies, rituals, chants and tradition have lost, or are in the process of losing, their significance. As Silko sees it, they are being swallowed by the plan of the "witchery." In short, the ancient culture of the Native Americans is being threatened by cultural contact.

Another cause of the misery of the Indians living in Gallup is the rising inflation which is caused by the presence of calculating white men who "raised prices in hotels and restaurants," and "made a lot of money off the tourists."

But worse still is the way this affects the Indians to whom they sold large quantities of liquor, "and in those years when liquor was illegal for Indians they made a lot more money because they bootlegged it" (p. 122).

This has given rise to economic exploitation as well as illicit traffic in liquor and flesh. At the same time, it gives the whites a chance to acculturate the Indians. For example, the white men come during and around the tourist season and make a fuss about sanitation and safety. They are followed by the police officials who, along with "the welfare people," strike with a vengeance and arrest the Indian men and women for being drunk in public. This is also the ideal time for them to arbitrarily pick up Indian children and send them packing to Homes in order to "civilize" them. They are thus "redeemed" by Christianity; acculturated, assimilated and told to shun their shameful, heathen past. However, eventually they get rejected by the larger social life of the white society. The results are the Lauras of the reservations, though Laura herself might not have strictly followed this path. The inevitable result is the familiar feeling of first being accepted and then rejected by the core-culture, so that one finally runs out of choices.

Tayo's mother, Laura, best symbolizes the Gallup women who stand out to wave and yell "Hey Honey" to the white men and the Mexicans who pass by. They gradually drift towards prostitution not merely for monetary gains but also in the vain hope of gaining some social status in the white world. But this only results in the birth of illegitimate children

(like Tayo) who have light coloured hair, green eyes, bushy hair or thick lips, "the ones women were ashamed to send home for their families to raise" (p. 113). (Tayo is sent home out of sheer necessity.) These children follow the Darwinian law of the "survival of the fittest" as they watch their mothers leave with white men. They grow up listening to footsteps and loud voices in the darkness and peeping through the holes in the rusty tins. Tayo, for example, notices a man "spilling wine on himself as he unbuttoned his pants" (p. 114).

At this point, it is interesting to note the sudden shift in the narrative style of the novel. From Tayo's personal recollections, which are being narrated to Betonie, in the first person singular, there is a shift in the narrative voice to the third person singular. This indicates that Tayo's and Laura's personal tragedies are, in fact, the larger social, universal tragedies of the Indians. They lead a life which is shared by so many like them. This generalization explains the shift in the narrative voice. At the micro level, the "he" and "she" are Tayo and Laura, while at the macro level the he/she could be any Indian living in Little Africa(s) in the U.S.—any Indian, be it a Zuni, Hopi, Navajo, or Laguna. They are all bound by similar circumstances and have similar tales, as old Grandma would say "it seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different" (p. 273).

These Indians share common sufferings and have undergone a similar process of survival against odds. There are

surrogate mothers ("The woman with the reddish colored hair, the one who used to feed him" (p. 114)), and isolated children ("He searched the floor until he found a plastic bar straw and then played with piles of cigarette bits," and "He learned to watch out for shit and in the winter he played with it, flipping it around with a willow stick. He did not play with other children; he ran from them when they approached him" (p. 116)); and hungry children ("When he found chewing gum stuck beneath the tables, he put it in his mouth and tried to keep it, but he always swallowed it. . . . He played for hours under the tables, quiet, watching for someone to drop a potato-chip bag or a wad of gum" (p. 115)).

This is a fatherless world and so the family unit consists only of the mother and the child/children. The houses are make-shift arrangements, quite primitive in contrast to the tall buildings in the big cities. Most women stayed in arroyos, using twisted pieces of old tin picked up from the garbage to build dingy homes:

They leaned the tin against the crumbly gray sides of the arroyo. His mother rolled big bricks up from the riverbed to hold the pieces of cardboard in place. It was cold then, and when the sun went down they built small fires from broken crates they found in the alleys and with branches they tore from the tamaric and willow (pp. 115-16).

Life here is always in a state of transit. Now and then the men and women indulge in some kind of fracas, leading to violence, which inevitably gives the police a chance to show its power. The police tear down their homes, take the children away, hand-cuff the men and women and

everything subsides for some time, only to start the vicious cycle all over again a few days later.

Tayo has spent his early childhood here, eating chewing gum and cigarette stubs and sleeping alone, watching his mother making love and returning home drunk. He has stayed in dirty arroyos with tin-roof houses, leading a lonesome life, gazing at stars as he would wait for his mother to return. His fate is tied up with the experiences of everyone else, and like the narrator of Winter in the Blood, he is transformed into an everyman figure, encompassing the personal sorrow and the social tragedy of the rest of the Indians. The image of the morbid past has frozen in his consciousness so that, as an adult, he is moved by and reminded of a scene which leads him back into his own past. He notices a woman with tangled hair and torn slip with a bruise on her forehead and in a desiccated state, walk alongside a man with an unbuttoned fly. Their plight reminds him of his mother's, or his own, or perhaps that of the Indians—"somebody you used to know" as Rocky puts it. But Tayo can see the emptiness all around them. They are like "survivors" peeping out at the world with "dull vacant eyes," reminiscent of Tayo's experiences after the World War, where he too emerges as a "survivor" viewing the world without hope and form. Like them he is torn and fragmented, very similar to Abel in House Made of Dawn. "They were Navajos," thinks Tayo, "but he had seen Zunis and Lagunas and Hopis there too, walking alone or in twos and threes along the dusty Gallup streets"

(p. 120). When he throws a penny at them it is not an act of Christian charity but is a gesture of empathy.

The misery of these Indians arises out of the fact that cultural change has rewoven their social fabric. Normally, in Native American communities, and in most tribal societies, the need for economic survival is not so strong as to send them migrating to towns. The nature of their social organization helps the community to fulfil its wants and needs within its structure. Yet, when whites come and impose their values and their system on the Indians and send them to live on reservations, the existing pattern of life is disturbed. Most reservations being on dry and barren land—as is the case here—the Indians are forced to follow a centrifugal path, moving out from their community towards towns and city glamour. The result is that they hunt for jobs in border towns like Gallup, Havre or even Los Angeles. The economics of demand and supply adds to their already declining survival curve for "the Gallup people knew they didn't have to pay wages or put up with anything they didn't like, because there were plenty more Indians where these had come from" (p. 121).

Besides, the urge to leave a job for a better living is the result of their exposure to limited education imparted by the white man. The education has sold a dream of assimilation and identity and promised a land of opportunities. Yet "they [Indians] were educated only enough to know they wanted to leave the reservation." On reaching the cities, they find that "there weren't many jobs they could get." Ultimately, the Indians are compelled to take up cheap labour.

They later get fired "because the white people in Gallup already knew they wouldn't ask any questions or get angry" (p. 120).

That they have been "gypped" and "asphyxiated" by the white man's power, is symbolized in the truck which Harley has "purchased" (he has no intentions of paying the money for "They owed it to us—we traded it for some of the land they stole from us") and the joke Tayo associates with it of "how the white people sold junk pickups to Indians so they could drive around until they asphyxiated themselves." Tayo himself realizes that it was not just a joke, but a threatening reality. This idea is reinforced by the historical detail that he recalls, "of an Army captain in the 1860s who made a gift of wool blankets to the Apaches: the entire stack of blankets was infected with smallpox" (p. 166).

The moral and economic degeneration of the Indians is best seen in the Helen-Jean episode. She is another "bar-hopping derelict" Indian, a Laura in the making. Economic necessity and a desire to gain social acceptability have forced her to leave her home in Towac. Although she wishes to have a secretarial job, she is forced to pick up a job worth seventy-five cents an hour, with a push broom and a scrub bucket in her hand. The tragic irony of her situation is evident from those borrowed clothes of Elaine, her roommate, which she wears everyday to hide the truth about the real nature of her job, and in the statement issued by the man as he offers her the job—"You might want to change your clothes." Not realizing the nature of her job, "she stood



in front of him, afraid to ask what was wrong with her clothes" (p. 170).

In her need to rise above her reality, Helen-Jean not only gets exploited but starts exploiting the Indian war-veterans by looking out for them around the first of every month when the veterans get their disability cheques. Her job at Kimo has taught her such tricks. However, it is a give and take relationship with the men. If she wants their money, they want her body. As they push themselves down into her soft body, she stares vacantly at the ceiling, waiting either for the act to be over, or for the men to give up or sleep off.

Helen-Jean's situation appears even more ironical as one sees her exploiting her own self. She looks down upon the Indian women in Gallup who have "dirty and straight" hair, unpencilled eyebrows, buttonless blouses and stains on the crotch of their pants. In contrast, she cuts her hair "short" and keeps it then "tightly curled," and "she touched up her leftbrow and put on lipstick." Having decided not to spend her whole life on the reservation, she picked up a job in the city. Undercurrents of irony are obvious when she compares herself to the Gallup women and concludes "that's how she'd end up" if she hung around with the war-veterans. "Like the rest of the Indians" (p. 174). What she doesn't realize, as she smiles at the winking Mexican, is that she has already become "like the rest of the Indians," perhaps a little different in degree, though not in nature. Her realization of her situation and disillusionment with town life is in line with Tayo's, Abel's, the Silver Dollar gang's and the

narrator's disillusionment. But unlike the protagonists, she is unable to rise above her immediate reality. In short, the values that the Helen-Jeans, the Aunties and the Emos of the reservations stand for are clear: these characters deny to themselves their ethnic past, and hence their half realized personalities. They strive to carve for themselves a niche in the Anglo-Saxon culture, seeking thereby an identity by which they can gain socio-economic security and acceptability in society.

#### CHRISTIANITY:

Amidst social and economic depravity Christianity thrives with missionary zeal. But what does it do to the Indians? First let us study the declared intentions of the missionary institutions:

Let then, missionary Institutions, established to convey to them the benefits of civilization and the blessings of Christianity, be efficiently supported; and with cheering hope, you may look forward to the periods when the savage shall be converted into the citizen; when the hunter shall be transformed into the mechanic; when the farm, the workshop, the School House, and the Church shall adorn every Indian village; when the fruits of Industry, good order, and sound morals, shall bless every Indian dwelling; and when throughout the vast range of country from Mississippi to the Pacific, the red man and the white man shall everywhere be found, mingling in the same benevolent and friendly feelings, fellow heirs to a glorious inheritance in the kingdom of Immanuel.<sup>10</sup>

These were the high hopes and the noble and pious thoughts of the white men, who were to propagate and preach Christianity amongst the natives. Both the missionary institutions and the blessings of Christianity have proved

impediments in the progress of the Indians despite these claims. But it is to be noticed that the aim of Christianity is to "convert" the "savage" into a "civilized" "citizen"; to transform the man attached to nature and land into a mechanic. Acculturation and assimilation set in as a consequence of the aims of the missionaries, and these, as we know, result in the dislocation and disorientation of the Indians. Ceremony indicates, as do Winter in the Blood and House Made of Dawn, the myopic vision of Christianity in espousing the cause of the Indians. The "benevolent and friendly feelings" are extensions of vested self-interest and hypocrisy. The only aim which it has is, as the above passage proclaims, "a glorious inheritance in the kingdom of Immanuel."

The reality of this situation becomes obvious when this passage, written in 1864, still holds water in the post-war period. Winter in the Blood, which has 1969 as its background, reflects most of these values which are still being pursued by Christian missionaries. Driven to reservations like "cows"—to use grandmother's image in Winter in the Blood—the Indians are herded by priests and by missionary schools and are not allowed to pursue their way of life. Thus, most Indians exist in a dual world—their own and the white man's. Religious and political powers have strengthened the white man's hands, and the Indians, living in deprivation, are easily lured, sometimes much against their wishes.

In Ceremony, Christianity emerges as a force which corrupts and inculcates false values in the Indians. In the long run it acts as a breaking force. If Teresa fell a victim,

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or a near victim to Christianity, in Welch's novel, it is Auntie in Ceremony who is neck-deep (given a choice she would even drown!) in Christianity, and hence is highly acculturated. She carries on her back the cross of her family's soiled reputation in order to prove to the Indian society her true Christian spirit. For this display, she is constantly on the lookout for a "new struggle" (p. 31). Earlier, she found it in the shame of her sister Laura, gone astray, ironically, by the teachings at school and Church. The protection she deems fit for Laura is in reality, an extension of her own insecurity in a rapidly changing world.

Christianity preaches high morality in social vacuum. For so long as economic survival remains the basic problem on the one hand, and human exploitation ever increasing on the other, to talk of morality is absurd. In fact, Tayo's mother goes awry precisely because of the values which Christianity has ingrained in her, though the priests fail to understand the reasons for her deviant behaviour. Consequently, "The Catholic priest shook his finger at her drunkenness and lust" (p. 71). As the narrative voice explains: "It might have been possible if the girl had not been ashamed of herself shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people; holy mission any white people who wanted only good for the Indians . . . urged her to break away from her home" (p. 71). The problem of Christianity was its inability to be an inherent part of the Indian environment and thought because, as Paula Gunn Allen points out,

"The Indian universe is one based on dynamic self-esteem, while the Christian universe is based on a sense of sinfulness and futility."<sup>11</sup>

Along with religion Laura's education, another gift of the white man, makes her ashamed of her Indian way of life. It has instilled into her the notion of the cultural inferiority of the Indians and the superiority of the white man. Therefore, when white men smiled at her she took it as a compliment for she thought her ways and manners were "exactly like the white girls."

Nonetheless, she is aware of the consequences of her acts, for "she could feel the truth in their [white men's] fists and in their greedy feeble love-making; but it was a truth for which she had no English words" (p. 71). The point is that she has, at one stage, realized the hollowness and meaninglessness of her life and situation. She realizes that she has become an unwitting tool in the hands of lusty white men who are reducing her to a love machine.

The consequences of her behaviour are based on a paradox: "She hated the people at home when white men talked of their peculiarity, but she hated herself more because she still thought about them, because she knew their pain at what she was doing with her life" (p. 71). Her recognition and acceptance of her dilemma suggest that it is difficult for a person to cut himself off completely from his cultural roots. It also indicates the inability of Christianity to thrive successfully in the Indian psyche, for at heart, as Momaday says, they remain essentially Indian.

The relationship between the individual and the community is a symbiotic relationship. Therefore, however shameful Laura's acts might appear to her people, the basic sense of oneness, of sharing a common heritage, and the idea of an organic unity of their social environment still exist among them. "The people felt something deeper: they were losing her, they were losing a part of themselves. The older sister had to act; she had to act for the people, to get the young girl back," and also "what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them" (p. 71).

The whites and the Christian priests, however, fail to notice this community feeling because "Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family" (p. 70). The very tenets on which Christianity is based are, therefore, radically different from the Native American religions. In her essay Allen explains this concept by means of a Cheyenne creation myth. Maheo the Great Spirit, which is the Creator, seeks help from its creations in expanding his newly created universe. Allen points out the limitations on his power "as well as a sense of proportion and respect for the powers of his creatures. This philosophy is in sharp contrast to the Judeo-Christian God who makes everything and tells everything how it may and may not function if it is to gain his respect and blessing and his commandments don't allow for change or circumstance."<sup>12</sup> She further adds that while the Judeo Christian God

Created a perfect environment for his creatures leaving them only one means of exercising their creative capacity and their ability to make choices and thus exercise their intelligence, and that was in disobeying him and destroying the perfection he had bestowed on them. The Cheyennes' creator is somewhat wiser, for he allows them to have unmet needs which they can, working in harmony with him, meet. They can exercise their intelligence and their will in a creative, positive manner and so fulfill themselves without destroying others.<sup>13</sup>

This basic difference changes the very outlook of life, of human relationships and of the nature of balances and harmonies between individuals and communities and between communities and land, for all are delicately linked together.

In some cases Christianity hardens people, as is the case with Auntie. In a moving analysis of her situation after Rocky's death, she decides to look after Tayo because "he was all she had left" (p. 30). Yet, Christianity blurs her vision as she later sees in Tayo another crutch to support her limping Christian morality. In him she finds yet "another opportunity to show to those who might gossip that she still had another unfortunate burden which proved above all else, she was a Christian woman" (p. 31). One must admire Auntie's zeal and ardour, for in this age of declining religious values, Auntie displays a zeal which, perhaps, even a white Christian might be unable to flaunt or boast of. It, however, only goes to stress the degree of acculturation in the Native Americans, who, in order to attain social recognition in the white society, are willing to sacrifice their cultural and religious values. Such sacrifices might be justifiable if they were to finally attain what they had envisioned. That,

Like Auntie, Rocky has learnt to live up to the American dream of rags to riches. He thus drifts away from his racial past which becomes a source of embarrassment so that "he deliberately avoided the old time ways" (p. 53). He dubs Indian ways as "superstitious" and science books become holy like the Bible.

It is not surprising then, that Auntie and Rocky never question irrationality and superstition in Christianity. In fact, they do not even want to be aware of it. The values which Indians might hold sacrosanct might appear irrational from the point of view of the white man. But it is unfair to pass judgement on one culture from another. In today's world, certain Indian values especially relating to creation myths about the origin of the universe in terms of frogs, tadpoles and flies might appear absurd and even superstitious. Rationally speaking, tadpoles are not rain carriers; nor will pollen and cornmeal help a dead man send rain clouds. But this, as is clear, is a part of the irrationality which is an inherent aspect of one culture and which is entirely eliminated in another culture which is scientific in temper, and whose very foundations are based on the idea of rationality. For the Indians, the concepts based on irrationality (irrationality is used as a concept in this discussion, hence it is non-evaluative) form an organic part of the Indian community's social and spiritual life and are powerful symbols of the community's faith in elements which form a part of their environment where "things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still



happened." Like Tayo, many Indians "still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him in school—that long ago things had been different, and human beings could understand what the animals said, and once the Gambler had trapped the storm clouds on his mountaintop" (p. 99).

In a scientific culture, killing certain harmless/harmful species might not appear unethical so long as it is done for a cause—that of scientific knowledge, growth and human progress. Yet we are all aware of the disturbed ecological balance that the earth is faced with. The fast extinction of certain plants and animal life, erosion of land, shifting courses of rivers, river beds turning dry—all are inter-related to the great chain of our existence. For the Indian, progress has different connotations. It is not physical or "linear" in shape and form, but rather spiritual and "spiral." Their notion of civilization does not require severing links with the land. They still derive solace and spiritual regeneration through their link with the land and cosmos. They do not believe in that nature of existence where everything is reduced to its logic and rationality. The laws which govern their systems are those of "irrationality," where the concept of "rationality" does not exist.

Consequently, as philosopher Peter Winch says, "Our blindness to the point of primitive modes of life is a corollary of the pointlessness of much of our own life."<sup>14</sup> This holds true not only for the white man, but also for the acculturated Indian. Auntie offers a case in point. She goes alone to the church in her black church shoes and she

takes elaborate pains to clean them, as if they too were a part of the holiness. Her basic idea of visiting the church is to show to those who always had "something else to laugh about" her family (p. 80) that above all "she was a devout Christian and not immoral or pagan like the rest of the family" (p. 80).

It is somewhat surprising then that Auntie never coaxed Rocky to visit the church. Perhaps she had enough confidence in her own capacity to earn salvation for the rest of the family. Or perhaps it didn't matter much so long as she achieved it, for "when it came to saving her own soul, she wanted to be careful that there were no mistakes" (p. 80).

Also, Auntie is aware that her mother, Robert and Josiah are too deeply rooted in their culture to succumb to any radical process of change. This is obvious in their belief in the Indian customs, ceremonies and their power, for it must be remembered that it was only on old Grandma's insistence that Tayo was made to undergo the ceremonial cure. Auntie is also aware of Josiah's opposition to scientific theories and his deep faith in the Indian life force. Thus, she often turns a deaf ear when Rocky shows his irreverence towards Josiah. That all the members view Auntie's religious virtuosity with scepticism is seen in old Grandma's statement, as Auntie leaves for church—"Ah Thelma, do you have to go there again?" (p. 80).

THE LAND:

"We are of the soil and the soil is us," best symbolizes this relationship of land and mind. In the final analysis, land in the novel emerges as an extension of the mind. Paula Gunn Allen has very perceptively analysed this relationship:

To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea of Native American life: the land and the people are the same. It is not a mere source of survival, distant from the creatures it nurtures; rather for Native Americans, it is being, as we are, as all that springs from the land is being: aware, palpable, and alive.<sup>15</sup>

It is this very sacred land that Tayo has cursed, thereby committing sacrilege. The curse is seen in the form of the drought ridden land which is linked with the curse Tayo had inflicted on the rain as well as the flies soon after Rocky's death. In this way the death of Rocky, Tayo's curse, drought and misery are all intertwined and "tangled with the present" which "snagged and tangled even more" as Tayo tries to unwind them. The imagery of entanglement is reinforced quite often in the novel thereby indicating not only the confusion which surrounds Tayo's inner and outer worlds, but also the labyrinth of relationship between the individual and all that of which he is a part. Thus, the relationship between the individual, the community, the land, the creatures, animals, plants and cosmos—are complex and organic. They cannot be separated. Therefore what happens to the individual affects all that is around him and vice versa.

The land that Tayo encounters is as barren as that which the narrator in Winter in the Blood was faced with. The land in Ceremony offers no emotional fulfilment or

all colors of yellow that day—silk yellow, petals like wild canary feathers, and blossoms as dark as the center of sun" (p. 230).

The contrast, then, between the two types of land is both distinct and sharp. Significantly, as long as Tayo sees the barrenness and dryness of the land, he is unable to communicate with his surroundings and is unable to recover fully. But the moment the cure begins, the land that he encounters becomes rich and fertile. This aspect of the land becomes a vital condition for the success of the ceremony. The land, then, finally emerges as the protagonist's source of strength and vitality. For example, the most obvious manifestation of this facet is seen much earlier in Tayo's life, in his first sexual experience with the Night Swan. The act is an initiation and ritual full of power and vitality. Silko links Tayo's internal sexual outburst with the external upheaval in nature, using powerful and archetypal symbols of storm and rain. The external and the internal, the physiologic and the psychologic worlds meet and overlap, as Tayo feels the merger of "the excitement of wet smells of rain and sweat." Tayo can feel "the warmth and softness of her legs and belly engulf" his body and notices that "her sounds were gentle and the storm outside was loud." Complete union is achieved as her rhythmic movements under him, at the time of her climax, merge "into the sound of the wind shaking the rafters and the sound of the rain in the tree" (p. 104).

This scene, both in style and content is reminiscent of Abel's love-making with Angela in Momaday's House Made of

Dawn, where it is followed by a clarity of vision and a sense of contentment in the form of an aftervision accompanied both by rain and storm:

Angela stood transfixed in the open door and breathed deep into her lungs the pure electric scent of the air. She closed her eyes, and the clear aftervision of rain, which she could still hear and feel so perfectly as to conceive of nothing else, obliterated all the mean and myriad fears that had laid hold of her in the past. Sharpest angles of light played on the lids of her eyes, and the great avalanche of sound fell about her.<sup>16</sup>

The roles obviously are reversed: Angela's new experience is like Tayo's, while Abel and the Night Swan are the instruments that usher in the new experience. Tayo's aftervision might not have Angela's clarity, but as the Night Swan tells him; "You don't have to understand what is happening. But remember this day, you will recognize it later. You are part of it now" (p. 105). The Night Swan has just cleared Tayo's misgivings about his mixed blood, for she introduces him to the idea of change, which is at the core of Betonie's ceremony that follows later in the novel. In a sense, she too like Angela, has "obliterated all the mean and myriad fears" that had laid hold of Tayo in the past.

These fears, however, get entangled during the white man's war, and now Tayo needs the services of another source of power—the medicine man. When Tayo returns from the war, he goes back to the Night Swan's house and is haunted by the earlier memories. His present reality is shattered and there is no inner tranquillity. Yet, on reaching Lalo's place he is transported back to his original environment

in the tale, they have symbolically, lost it. The whole ceremony of purification needs to be performed in order to exorcize the people and appease the Mother Earth. Tayo's faith in the land is finally reinforced as he watches a hummingbird fly by: "As long as the hummingbird had not abandoned the land, somewhere there were still flowers, and they could all go on" (p. 100). Tayo, thus, is conscious of the Indian ethos in him. He has reached that central point in his life which, like in Momaday's and Welch's protagonists' case, is an epiphanic moment of realization. His situation is, in a certain sense, also quite close to the narrator of the Invisible Man who comes to realize that awareness of the community's knowledge leads to a knowledge of the self.<sup>18</sup> But in Tayo's case, the situation is actually reversed because a knowledge of the self through ceremonial cures leads to an enhanced knowledge of the Indian community.

In the pages that follow, we shall trace the growth of this new awareness, which has been present in Tayo's consciousness since the war days. In fact his sickness is aggravated by the awareness which ethnicity has created in him.

#### ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS:

The presence of ethnicity in Tayo can, in fact, be traced to the pre-war days. In his attempt to help his people get rid of the dry spell, he had essayed to journey in the early hours of the morning, stepping into the role of the holy men as "he shook the pollen from the flowers

gently and sprinkled it over the water" for "the things he did seemed right, as he imagined with his heart the rituals the cloud priests performed during a drought" (p. 98).

Tayo performs the elaborate ceremony first by recounting the story of the formation of life on earth, seen in the spider who carried life force in the form of its eggs, and next by drawing the powerful ceremonial sand paintings. He is reminded of the other stories he had heard about the spiders. Spider Woman in American Indian folklore, appears as the Thought Woman. Spiders are also responsible for the transportation of souls to heaven, carrying them in their webs which represent the basket. Finally, Silko herself has referred to the Spider Woman as "the Thought Woman" who, along with her two sisters Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tsts'ity'i, created the universe and the four worlds below it. In Tayo's ethnic sensibilities she represents the life force and appears as a saviour for "She alone had known how to outsmart the malicious mountain Ka't'sina who imprisoned the storm clouds" (p. 99). This story is re-narrated to us in the form of oral poetry (p. 178). What is significant is the sense of pride and faith Tayo has in his native culture despite acculturation in the form of science classes where "the science books explained the cause and effect" of things. Fortunately, the education imparted by Grandma has been on the lines of Francisco in House Made of Dawn, so Tayo had "never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she spoke those words as she did each time she told them stories, and

he still felt it was true, despite all they had taught him in school" (p. 99).

Later, when Tayo notices the tadpoles, he thinks of them as "rain's children," and with ecstasy he watches the dragonflies in shades of blue "shimmering with almost black irridescent light and mountain blue." He is aware of the stories about them though he is unable to recall the exact details. For example, among the Zunis, the dragonfly is thought to possess supernatural powers and therefore it is a taboo to kill it, just as the killing of the frogs, tadpoles and flies is prohibited. In fact, the Somaikoli Society of the Zunis is known to cure sore eyes, convulsions and cramps with the help of the dragonflies. This appears significant in the light of Tayo's post-war fatigue.

Before the war, Tayo, in one of his visits to the mountains, was overwhelmed to see the world around him throbbing with life. He notices "a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them. It was a world alike, always changing and moving . . ." (p. 100). However, this pastoral vision of Tayo undergoes a drastic change on his return from the war. The "alive" and "always changing world" appears dead and static, giving in to decay. As noted earlier, the land and the Native American consciousness are complementary in nature. Therefore, both Tayo and the land are in need of a cure. The fertility of the land, then, lies in Tayo's cure and vice versa. The need for this cure is felt most urgently by old Grandma, who is convinced that only Indian medicine can cure him. The



triumph of Indian medicine over white medicine is seen in Auntie's giving in to Grandma's suggestion despite her strong faith in the ways of the white man. However, she tries to dismiss Indian medicine as a "bag of weeds and dust" (p. 35). For old Grandma, who is rooted firmly in her tribal culture, a ceremony is not just a "bag of weeds and dust." It is the repository of racial experience, and hence not only meaningful, but also powerful. The small quotation in the opening section of the book, in fact, appears to be straight out of her mouth:

What she said:  
The only cure  
I know  
is a good ceremony,  
that's what she said (p. 3).

Commenting on the meaning and nature of Indian ceremonies, Allen explains thus:

The purpose of a ceremony is integration: the individual is integrated, fused, with his fellows, the community of people is fused with that of the other kingdoms, and this larger communal group with the worlds beyond this one. A "raising" or expansion of individual consciousness naturally accompanies this process. The isolate, individualistic personality is shed, and the person is restored to conscious harmony with the universe . . . all ceremonies—whether for war or healing create and support the sense of community which is the bedrock of tribal life. This community is not merely that of members of the tribe, but necessarily includes all orders of being that people the tribe's universe.<sup>19</sup>

Whether he has liked it or not, Tayo's ethnicity, in fact, has never really left him completely. But it has consciously been shunned by his acculturated aunt and her son Rocky. We are told "how Rocky deliberately avoided the

old time ways" (p. 53) and about Auntie's insistence that "Rocky is different." She has impressed upon him that the white way of life is superior and hence to be valued. So even before Rocky is out of school he has ambitious plans of going out and "about places he would live and the reservation wasn't one of them" (p. 80).

However, Tayo is different, for he is "supposed to stay here [reservation]" (p. 76). Through indirect and direct references to his mother, Auntie has constantly rubbed into him the shame of his mixed parentage and his mother's deviant behaviour. Thus, he is a victim not only of the white man's jokes, but also of the hatred of his own people. It is ironical that the whiteness of which Tayo is so ashamed is the very cause of Emo's jealousy. It is again ironical that Auntie's sense of shame, in the long run, has helped Tayo return to his ethnic pride. In this way, Tayo never really strays far from his roots. When he was in school he always looked upon science with some degree of scepticism, for he always remembered the Indian ways. He was constantly guided by his Grandmother and Josiah who would patiently explain to him the significance of animals, plants and environment to human existence.

Consequently, Rocky's white influence has little effect on Tayo. This is evident from the incident of the deer hunt. The hunt is so unlike the way a white man would kill animals. The ritual, which is performed after the deer hunt, represents Indian values. The wounded deer lies gazing at Tayo and almost hypnotizes him. It arrests his

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thoughts as he remembers "what they said about the deer was true" (p. 52). Moved by the deer's death, and remembering his native customs, Tayo removes his jacket in order to cover the deer's face because this was one way of showing respect to the deer whom they had killed. This respect for an animal which has been killed for food shows that the deer is symbolic of life force. They have killed it for their food, hence for their survival. The killing is not butchery. It is, in fact, a ritual, involving reverence for the animal who has given its life. Therefore, Tayo remembers that if no respect is shown, "the deer would be offended and they would not come to die for them the following year" (p. 53).

The ritual that Tayo performs involves Josiah, Robert and Grandma who sprinkle blue cornmeal and yellow pollen on the deer's nose in order to feed its spirit. In all solemnity, Grandma places it on a Navajo rug and turquoise strings and silver rings are put around the tips of the antlers. Next, some cornmeal is placed nearby so that anyone wanting to show respect could sprinkle it on the deer's nose. As expected, Rocky is only "embarrassed at what they did" (p. 53).

The solemnity that marks the occasion makes Tayo realize the significance of their act and the symbolic meaning of the ritual. Thus, when his cure begins after he meets Ku'oosh and Betonie, it becomes relatively simpler for them to treat him because ethnic sensibilities have never really left him completely. However, caught between the white and the Indian world views Tayo, like Abel and Welch's narrator, is unable to identify himself with either

of them. He apparently belongs to the world which is somewhere between the two, something like a no-man's-land. But as Betonie points out, this no-man's-land is as bad as the white world, and if Tayo feels he has run out of choices he might as well return to the Gallup world—"Die that way and get over with it" (p. 129) he says. Tayo has to detach himself from his immediate past if he has to survive. He can feel the presence of the entangled past in his present—"Calling up the past as if it were his future too, as if things would always be the same for him" (p. 30). What he essentially needs is a new beginning.

The hope of a new beginning is facilitated by the presence of the tribal past in Tayo. Because of it, he progressively moves towards regeneration as this hope is gradually aroused in him. The hope is symbolically present in the image of the sunrise, which occurs three times in the novel. Number three represents perfection in Pythagorean sense: Compounded of unity (two) and diversity (one). The sunrise takes place in the beginning, the middle and the end of the novel. Each sunrise is either preceded or followed by an important revelation. For example, in the opening section, it is preceded by a prophetic voice declaring that the cure lies in the power of the ceremony: "The only cure/ I know is a good ceremony,/that's what she said" (p. 3). This is followed by the singing which accompanies Tayo's disturbed thoughts. It is in Spanish and he perceives it as "a familiar love song." It has been mentioned earlier too that the song is a powerful weapon for the Indian to

ward off evil and death. It is, in fact, his source of strength. In this connection Allen provides us with some ethnic insights into the meaning of chants and ceremonies. "The natural state of existence is whole," she says, "Thus chants and ceremonies emphasize restoration of wholeness, for disease is a condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole."<sup>20</sup>

The second sunrise (p. 189) is preceded by the dream Tayo has, "a continuous dream that was not interrupted even when she reached out for him again and pulled him on top of her" (p. 188). The dream is significant because it reveals to him the whereabouts of the lost cattle whose loss is at the nerve centre of his troubled consciousness. Like the song in the earlier sunrise, the sexual experience emphasizes the idea of rejuvenation and wholeness. Now that the location of the cattle becomes clear, one part of Tayo's ceremony is completed, for as he had earlier admitted to himself, "there would be no peace until he did [find the cattle]" (p. 152). Immediately following the dream is the second sunrise, accompanied by the image of the dawn unfolding itself, stirring the racial memory and ending in an epiphany:

He stood up. He know the people had a  
song for the sunrise.  
Sunrise!  
We come at Sunrise  
to greet you  
We call you at sunrise.  
Father of the clouds  
you are beautiful  
at Sunrise.  
Sunrise!

He repeated the words as he remembered them, not sure if they were the right ones, but feeling they were right, feeling the instant of the dawn was an event which in a single moment gathered all things together—the last stars, the mountaintops, the clouds, and the winds—celebrating this coming. The power of each day spilled over the hills in great silence. Sunrise. He ended the prayer with "sunrise" because he knew the Dawn people began and ended all their words with "sunrise" (pp. 189-90).

Tayo suddenly becomes aware of the racial past embedded deep in him as he wonders "maybe the dawn woke the instinct in the dim memory of the blood" (p. 190). The sunrise is preceded and followed by revelations. In the first sunrise, Tayo could see the darkness flitting away as light "cast a white square on the opposite wall at dawn. He watched the room grow brighter then, as the square of the light grew steadily warmer." The sun, the life force, carries with it the image of the powerful pollen, as Tayo notices the light growing "more yellow with climbing sun" (p. 5).

Similarly, the sunshine that fills the Mountain Spirit's house, after the second sunrise "made a big square on the floor, and something in the silence of the room was warm and comfortable like this sunlight" (p. 191). The "big square" that the sunshine twice makes is reminiscent of the square sand paintings which Betonie and the Mountain Spirit make as a part of Tayo's cure. The yellowness of the sunlight is seen in the Mountain Spirit who wears "a yellow skirt" which is complementary to the blue cornmeal seen in the Night Swan's blueness. Both the yellow pollen and the blue cornmeal are essential offerings in a ceremonial ritual. This idea is reinforced by the poems in the story. Finally,

the love-making, like the preceding sunrise, is in itself a source and symbol of strength, vitality and regeneration. It parallels Tayo's love-making with the Night Swan, which too was accompanied by the presence of natural elements of life force.

The final sunrise marks the completion of the ceremony, the end of witchery and the completion of the cure at the micro level. Hence a ceremonial offering:

Sunrise, accept this offering  
Sunrise! (p. 275)

Weaving its way through these three symbolic markers, is Tayo's consciousness awakening to the ethnic call. Right in the beginning, Tayo recalls his war days and remembers the curse. Related to the curse is the death of Rocky. While trying to ward off death in order to save Rocky, Tayo is conscious of the inherent powers of Indian story-telling. Thus, while carrying Rocky on a stretcher, "he made a story for all of them, a story to give them strength. The words of the story poured out of his mouth as if they had substance, pebbles and stone, extending to hold the corporal up, to keep his knees from buckling, to keep his hands from letting go of the blanket" (p. 11).

Betonie, it should be noted, resorts to a similar technique of story-telling, to keep up Tayo's sagging strength. His first story is about the little boy who is carried away by the bears. The story thematically parallels that of Tayo's. Betonie seems to be making an interesting observation that the boy "wasn't quite the same" after his return from the bear people, hinting that a change of culture implies a changed consciousness.



Betonie's next story is perhaps the most powerful, awesome and gripping of the many stories that are woven into the texture of the novel. It deals with the insurgence of the white men, the setting loose of the witchery and the downfall of the Indians. Although there is an attempt on the part of the Indian witches to "call that story back," the alien witch declares, "It's already turned loose/It's already coming/It can't be called back" (p. 145).

The final story is about the Magician Ck'oyo who imprisons the storm clouds so that the land becomes arid. The Sun, like Hummingbird in an earlier story, "went looking for them. He performs a complete ceremonial ritual with pollen, tobacco and coral beads and succeeds in tricking the gambler. He thus successfully secures the release of his children. This story again closely follows the trajectory of Tayo's story since the loss of the stormclouds results in the drought, leading to misery and death (pp. 179-84). These stories have the same power that Tayo invokes while trying to save Rocky from dying. It is a distinct example of an increased awareness of the racial experience in him. The crucial moments of despair and of disillusionment with the war trigger those meaningful stories which are embedded deep within him. Therefore, to save a life, he is quick to resort to the use of Indian medicine. Similarly, the senseless killing of the Japanese pains him. In the death of the Japanese soldiers he does not see the victory of the Allied forces over the Axis power. Rather, the collective unconscious in him is stirred as he sees in the Japanese genocide the killing

of his own people. It is only much later, when he identifies the Trinity Site in New Mexico, that he realizes the reason for his strong sense of identification with the Japanese. It also becomes clear to him why Josiah's face superimposed over the Japanese soldier's. There appear to be good reasons for Silko's juxtaposition of the Indian and the Japanese identities. In tracing the origins of the Indians, many anthropologists and historians seem to have linked them to some Eastern civilizations. Towards the end of the novel it is no longer appears as a mere coincidence as Tayo discovers that the Trinity Site, chosen in New Mexico to test the atomic bomb, was a part of the Indian country. The witchery does not end here because the same bomb was later dropped on the Japanese to whom he can perhaps, trace back his people's origins. He has thus, in the cause of his journey, "arrived at the point of convergence" where evil had encompassed within its fold the fate of the entire universe, including the living and the non living, the animate and the inanimate, for all were "united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known the mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter" (p. 258). The link between the Indians and the Japanese extends further as Tayo, aware of the pattern that is slowly emerging, feels that it concerns not merely the shattered heritage of the Indians, but it had "no boundaries."

Tayo's exorcism and cure cannot be separated from the rising ethnicity in him. The ability to see his sickness

not only as something personal, but as a part of a larger whole, and the ensuing need for its cure, are both linked with the presence of ethnic consciousness in him. The nature of his ceremony is such that it requires certain pre-requisites. So in order to make this ceremony a success, Tayo, or for that matter any other person, has to have deep faith in the rituals and customs which lie at the very core of the ceremony. He could never have achieved success if he had viewed the entire ceremony with scepticism, calling it superstition like Rocky or Auntie would. The success of the ceremony lies in an affirmation of one's faith in the interconnectedness of nature, in the capacity to change with and accommodate to the changing world. Without faith and hope no ceremony can ever be a success. Hence Betonie's warning at Tayo's scepticism: "If you don't trust me, you better get going before dark. . . . Anyway I couldn't help anyone who was afraid of me" (p. 129).

The ceremony of Tayo's cure is shown in two parts. The initial grounding is done by Old Ku'oosh, who "spoke softly, using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it" (p. 35). Thus, Ku'oosh in his soft tone, which assumes the form of a low humming chant, initiates Tayo into the healing ceremony, and establishes Tayo's link with his cultural past. This link lies in the power of the word. Language is one of the most powerful means of identification. Alienation and loneliness affecting

the Native Americans are largely a result of their loss of contact with land, culture and language. We need only refer to Abel's sense of inarticulateness and Tayo's feeling of speechlessness (p. 15). The self which is formless (invisible) and without sound, needs rejuvenation, and a propelling life force. It needs a medium in the form of a visible self. It needs sound, which is life, as opposed to silence, which is death.

In this context, Old Ku'oosh's ceremonial beginning appears both meaningful and significant, for he makes Tayo aware of his ethnic self. He gives him form and sound by stirring those archetypal images which have been transmitted to him through the racial experience of the tribe, because the potency and power of such images is multiplied and intensified by virtue of their being shared historically by communities which are dead as well as those which are alive. There was loss in the beginning; Ku'oosh instils hope; Betonie leads to regeneration. This, then, appears to be the cycle of the American Indian protagonist. In a symbolic fashion, Tayo is revitalized as he enters the cave which is dark, deep, "deeper than sound." It appears to be like a womb. Tayo is reminded that "Snakes went there to restore life to themselves" (p. 36). Thus, pointing towards the North-East, in the direction of the cave, Ku'oosh shows Tayo "the way"<sup>20</sup> to restore life. The journey Tayo undertakes is physical, spiritual and psychological. As Tayo feels the

awesome nature of the cave, as he hears the crickets chanting in the coolness of the night, he feels he knows the place. Through the ceremony performed by Ku'oosh, it becomes clear that there exists a world which is "fragile," a world which has to be understood in the form of stories, for "so long as stories are alive, there is life for people."

Ku'oosh's vision, however, is limited, for he is unwilling to comprehend the great changes that have taken place over the years since the white invasion. Although he realizes that "after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift, and it became necessary to create new ceremonies." Yet Ku'oosh clings tenaciously to the earlier values which do not accommodate or recognize change. His notion of war, in which "you couldn't kill another human being in battle without knowing it, without seeing it," is obviously outdated (p. 37). Unable to visualize the nature and scope of World War II, and hence Tayo's sickness, his attitude reflects a fatalistic streak: "There are somethings we can't cure like we used to, not since white people came" (p. 39).

Ku'oosh's incapacity to deal with new issues and unseen but powerful forces stems from the narrow, static and rigid vision which is held by so many Native Americans who are unwilling to accommodate to and change with the times. For Silko, the main message of the novel lies in the idea of organic growth through constant change—change and growth being the essential order of the universe. The Night Swan could not have been far from the truth when she said "most

people are afraid of change" (p. 44) and the same idea of change is later emphasized by Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, who with his ancient wisdom expounds that "things which don't shift and grow are dead things" (p. 133).

In fact, the cycle of change and growth forms the core of man's existence in a world view where the world is "fragile," where order is maintained by a delicate system of balances and harmonies. Men and matter are interrelated so that "it took only one person to tear away the delicate strands of the web, spilling rays of the sun" (p. 40).

As Tayo is about to be initiated into the second round of his cure, he very symbolically washes off his white experience as he vomits beside the road, "holding his heaving belly, trying to vomit out everything—all the past, all his life" (p. 77). Erasing the white experience, in fact, is vital to the success of Betonie's ceremony. Tayo must be aware of his Indian sensibilities in order to be an organic whole.

Consequently, as Betonie propitiates his ceremonial cure, Tayo realizes the implications of his—the individual's—actions in a fragile, interrelated world of cause and effect relationships. Any act of man is not an isolated act, because it has wider implications. Tayo, therefore, concludes that "his sickness was a part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything" (p. 132).

This appears to be one of the most significant passages in the development of Tayo's consciousness and the resulting rise of ethnic awareness, for it is a result of such racial

wisdom, as opposed to the white man's individual knowledge, that Tayo finally gets cured. Betonie's entire ceremony, involving the Scalp Ceremony, chants and sand paintings, centre around the concept of a larger cause and a larger cure. He draws mental maps and Tayo has to translate them into tangible realities.

Thus starts his final round of purification. So far Tayo has travelled a full circle of loss (land), hope (Ku'oosh and Betonie) and fulfilment (finding the lost cattle). In his act of throwing up Tayo has not merely washed off the past white experience, but also severed all contacts with the way of life his "buddies" lead. It is not until the very end of his ceremony that he will encounter Leroy and Harley. He errs then, mistaking them to be his "friends," for he thinks "they had come when he needed them most" (p. 249). The situation is highly ironical because "his friends" have actually come as his nemesis. But the powers of Betonie's ceremony and the Mountain Spirit successfully combat the evil. With the help of the new insight that he has acquired as a result of his initiation into the tribal ceremonies, Tayo can see the pattern of the "witchery": "that they were not his friends but had turned against him" (p. 254). He recalls Betonie's vision and the pattern of his sand paintings and realizes that "His protection was in the sky. . . . He had only to complete this night, to keep the story out of the reach of the destroyers for a few more hours, and their witchery would turn, upon itself, upon them" (p. 259).

In this way, Betonie makes Tayo aware of the power and evil nature of witchery; the role of the Indians and the white men in it, and, finally, of the healing power of the Indian ceremonies. Through his tales and asides, he makes it clear that the evil perpetrated today and the "generalized moralistic mush" that today's society is, are all a part of the larger plan of the witchery, which is out to destroy the world. Indian ceremonies can still play a vital role in saving the world of its misery and sickness because it is the Indians who are responsible for setting loose the witchery: "I tell you, we can deal with the white people, with their machines and their beliefs. We can because we invented white people; it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place" (p. 139) points out Betonie.

Betonie is, perhaps, trying to place the Indians in the historical context. Because of their inter-tribal fighting and petty jealousies, glimpses of which are seen in the story of Descheeny, who is Betonie's grandfather, and the Mexican girl-captive (pp. 152-58) (and the Blackfeet vs. Crees in Winter in the Blood) the Indians dug their own grave. The rise of white power and the decline of the Indian tribal structure were largely a result of the lack of unity on the part of the Indians. Their defeat was thus a result of a historical process in which the Indians also played a part. The "witchery" had been unknowingly set loose by the Indians, and their attempts, like those of the witches, to "call it back" were too late for what had been set moving could not be recalled so easily. The conflict of the Indian vs. Indian



is seen in the novel also in the form of Emo-Tayo rivalry. Instead of a unified stand, the Indians fight bitterly among themselves, thereby weakening their communities, and strengthening the power of witchery. They are, like Emo, an unwilling tool in their own hands as well in those hands which are being controlled by external powers. Through Betonie's enlightened vision, Silko, like Welch and Momaday, is seeking a Pan-Indian approach for the survival and regeneration of Indians.

This regeneration demanded that "transitions had to be made in order to become whole again, in order to be the people our Mother would remember; transitions, like the boy walking in the bear country being called back softly" (p. 178). As observed earlier, these transitions are being made by Tayo at the micro level. He is like the boy who has run into the bear country, and has to be retrieved. In another form, like the Hummingbird, he has taken upon himself the onus of the community's cure. With the final sunrise, "the transition was completed," (p. 267), and "even if the sky would have been cloudless the end was the same. The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern was theirs; the feeling was theirs: We came out of this land and we are hers" (p. 267) (italics added for emphasis).

Here, then, is the final completion of the broken ecology of human psyche: the reunion of the people and the land. As seen in Tayo, it has "bridged the distance between his isolate consciousness and the universe."<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the return of Tayo, like that of his counterparts in House Made of Dawn and Winter in the Blood, is also a redemptive return; a return to his original people; a return to the land, thereby establishing a contact which had been severed due to his association and contact with white culture. The erosion of cultural values, as a result of the harmful effect of Christianity and western education, is effectively controlled through Tayo's symbolic rejection of Christianity and acceptance of Indian medicine. This, in fact, is responsible for his final cure and his awakening, and it follows from the nature of the cure that the cure is not just Tayo's but of all those who are around him.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Words I whisper  
are people traveling  
who lost their way  
who lost their red horses  
as if tethered to fire. .

- "Guarding Sleep for  
My Daughter, Sandra"  
Linda Hogan

## CONCLUSION

"What is the right of a huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged?"<sup>1</sup> questioned John Quincy Adams, seemingly in all justification and rightful indignation. Today, we only have to substitute "white" for the word "huntsman" to realize the underlying irony of Adams' question. For the American Indians seem to be asking a somewhat similar question, quite obvious from our foregoing discussions in Chapters II, III and IV of the novels House Made of Dawn, Winter in the Blood and Ceremony respectively. However, their indictment of white domination and insurgence is subtle, and indirect, and is reflected in their attitude towards white values. The Indians view Christianity with suspicion and they express their concern for the need for a land ethic. The white society appears indifferent towards its people and the land, the individuals feel isolated and consequently there is an absence of a meaningful relationship between the individual, the society and the land.

The Indian characters in the three novels perceive white dominance over them as an aggression which is both physical as well as psychological in its impact. This aggression appears to be a part of the white ethos, arising from the American notion of themselves as a superior race. In order to understand the white ethos, which is so very different from the Indian ethos, let us understand the nature

of whites' perception about themselves, as it emerges from our analysis as well as the historical past.

It must be realized that the white society is heavily ethnocentric in nature. By ethnocentrism we mean the tendency of a people to exaggerate and intensify everything in their own folkways which is peculiar and which differentiates them from others. As a result the white perspective was always coloured, not only in relation to the Native Americans but also to its other minorities. However, ethnocentrism was not peculiar to the American whites alone. It was widely prevalent among the European rulers too, who were colonial mughals in Asia and Africa. The basic premise of the white attitude towards other races stemmed from a notion of and an inherent belief in the concept of cultural superiority. "Racism," as Berkhofer points out, "as a specific social doctrine is an invention of the European peoples in the modern period of their expansion around the world."<sup>2</sup> It assumes that moral qualities bear a co-relation to the physical characteristics of a race and human beings can be classified as belonging to superior and inferior "stocks." Thus the whites in America assumed Indians to be deficient in comparison to them. This image of the "deficient" Indian developed into a stereotype. The whites decided that the Indians needed "reformation," which was synonymous with "civilization" and civilization was equated with the white culture. They, therefore, chalked out the future course of the Indians—the "deficient" ones. In the process they overlooked the idea of cultural diversity, and forgot that

the Native American culture had an identity which was as distinct as that of any other culture; that the yardstick to measure it was not the white culture. It had to be seen and judged in its own terms.<sup>3</sup>

Unable to shake off ethnocentrism and the racist bias, the whites assumed common goals for the natives. They presumed that what was good for them was also good for the natives. This disturbed the structure of the tribal community, as is seen from the social and economic depravity in Gallup in Ceremony and the reservation life in House Made of Dawn and Winter in the Blood. The American policies were essentially designed to acculturate the Indians in order to assimilate them into the core-culture. The image of the deficient Indian was also applied while acquiring land. Any uninhabited land could be granted to the explorers. The principle of vacuum domicilium was followed in the acquisition of land. However, conflict arose because the Indian notion of vacant land was different from the white. In conquering lands, although the whites seemingly offered the Natives a large measure of choice, they factually left them with no other option but to vacate and quit. Early in 1512, the Indians had no choice but to become converts to Christianity if they wanted to survive. This is very clear from a document called Requerimiento. Exhorting the Indians to obey the church and acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope, it warned:

If you do so you will do well we shall  
receive you in all love and charity . . .

But if you do not do this or if you maliciously delay in doing it, I certify to you that with the help of God we shall forcefully enter into your country and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can . . . we shall take you and your wives and your children and shall make slaves of them . . . and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their highness or ours, or of these soldiers who come with us.<sup>4</sup>

The whites, thus, justified their felonies either in the name of Christianity or civilization—both terms being used interchangeably. It was not merely their desire, but also their moral duty, to redeem the Native pagans. But somewhere in their attempt to justify their actions, they confused political power with religion, civilization with savagery, and proselytization with colonialization.

In the course of our analyses of the three novels selected for study, the Indian writers present an insider's perspective into the psyche of the Indians and the ethos of the Indian experience. They have successfully combined their individual, first hand experience with the collective experience of the race. Through the perceptions of Abel, the unnamed narrator in Winter in the Blood, and Tayo, not to miss our Francisco and the two grandmothers in Winter in the Blood and Ceremony, the writers drive home the point that the Indians are very much a proud race, conscious of the significance of their unique identity. One American Indian viewpoint that has emerged forcefully from the three novels is that the Americans have always tried to seek, whenever they attempted, a different level of equality and

assimilation. To quote Professor Vine Deloria Jr., "Equality meant having access to informal networks and relationships of the rich" and not "the chance to compete in the market place."<sup>5</sup> This, however, is one aspect of equality. The other kind of equality, which Momaday, Welch and Silko talk of, is the equality on paper and the equality in practice. This is best seen in the discrimination the Indians face in the hands of Martinez, the white law, the security-guards and other such agencies. As Welch's narrator so rightfully says: "They can never figure out why an Indian should want to go to Canada." Deloria feels that the white policies were aimed to trick Indians into "cultural and emotional servitude."<sup>6</sup> Further, economic assistance implied an acceptance of core cultural norms and values in exchange.

Earlier there appeared to be a direct, forceful imposition of white values, political in its strategy. Now, as seen in the socio-religious life of the communities, the influence felt is indirect, subtle, psychological and yet equally powerful. This kind of an imposition poses a greater threat. To quote Professor Deloria again, "As the cultural traditions of racial minorities erode and become homogenized . . . these groups will be sapped of their natural resources for survival and become perpetual wards of the welfare state."<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the American Indians call for a basic restructuring of American perception of cultural diversity. This precisely appears to be the tone, and the assertion of the narrative voices of the three novels that we have analyzed. In all the novels we are presented with a cultural



conflict situation: a minority culture in the process of being annihilated by a powerful dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. The novels trace a path of dismay, awareness, rejection and return, i.e. a dismay at the meaninglessness of present life, arising out of discontentment with white values, leading to an awareness of the past tradition of tribal cultures, to the rejection of Christianity and thus white culture, and finally to the rise of ethnic awareness. As the novels progress, there is an increasing degree of ethnic awareness in the protagonists. The idea of ethnicity is constantly reinforced by the use of ethnic imagery which form the liet motifs in the novels.

According to Professor J. Dorman, "Ethnic awareness, ethnic group affiliation, the quest for ethnic roots, all permeated the decade's ethos."<sup>8</sup> However, the vision that arises out of our analysis is larger—that ethnicity in the Indians did not remain confined to the "decade's ethos" alone, but preceded and extended beyond the 60s. It permeated the writer's ethos, and as Larson says, "these works were written to give white America a picture of Native American life, to present the Indian's side of the story—to define Indian consciousness."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, in the three novels that have been analyzed in this thesis, we notice the writers' collective concern for the Indians and their Indianness, establishing a separate reality—a world distinct and independent from white America—thus offering an alternative to the values and the world view of the whiteman.

The white world view is not only different to the natives but also alien to their understanding of the world. The nature of white society calls for a constant development in terms of material progress. To elaborate upon it is not really essential, as the materialism of the West has been much talked about. Suffice it to say that the world view is progressive in a "linear" sense, where success and advancement can be measured in terms of a movement from one point to another—a movement which is tangible, empirical and historical. In contradistinction, the American Indian world view is "spiral" in terms of its progress, where advancement cannot be measured in physical terms, since its movement is in the form of "transcendence." It progresses in degrees, only a return to the central point at a higher level each time.

Hence, the nature of white progress is alien and incomprehensible to the Native American communities. The weaker ones—the Lauras, the Aunties, the Teresas, the Rockys, the Emos, the Benallys etc. are the first victims of the idea of a tangible progress. This is seen in their rejection of their traditional wisdom and heritage, symbolized best by Auntie's notion of Indian medicine as "a bag of weeds and dust." The sensitive ones, however, are the first ones to feel the onslaught of the white cultural aggression. Thus we have Abel, Tayo and Welch's narrator, who unable to find conviction in the values the white man offers, feel "sick." Their malady stems from their inability to become a part of a society which refuses to accept them and also from their failure to find meaning and salvation

in the values of the white world. Added to this misery is their agony at not being able to identify themselves fully with their tribal past. Caught at cultural cross-roads, these heroes make a spirited attempt to seek redemption by returning to their tribal past, as explained in detail in our analysis of the three novels.

The loneliness, estrangement and alienation of Abel, Tayo and the narrator are a result of their inability to communicate with their society and vice-versa. This again is a result of cultural change, for the white society believes in individual self-sufficiency and interest. The Native American communities, however, do not share this view. But their social fabric, and hence their world view, is rewoven as a result of cultural contact and conflict. Consequently, the characters suffer from a "sickness" alien to Indian ethos. They all make a "journey" back into the meaningful past.

The writers do not insist on a primitive mode of existence. Instead, what they suggest is the need for a world view in which the spirit of place and the spirit of man are in harmonious balance, where the relationship between man and his environment is a meaningful process of symbiosis and is not parasitic. This helps man control the balance between the mental and the geophysical ecology. Relationships of this kind are seen in Tayo's communion with the plant and animal life, in Abel's attempts to be a part of the "remembered earth" and in the narrator's sorrow at his inability to reduce the distance between himself and the land—a gap "as deep as it was empty." Thus, it is apparent that the

fuerza territorial (pull of the land) has deep impact on the psyche of these characters. In short, as shown through our analyses, the writers express the need for a land ethic in a world which has traversed far and wide in the realms of logic and rationality. In this context, the writers' suggestion of going back is not a "going back" in the sense of regression but of transcendence to a higher level of consciousness.

It thus becomes perspicuous that Momaday, Welch and Silko are essentially trying to offer us a viable alternative to the white world of sickness and loss of hope and faith. That the white world suffers from a deep malaise is seen in the form of World War II which is so effectively used by Momaday and Silko as their starting points. They show the evil side of the war through the perceptions of their protagonists who react sharply to the war and this leads them into serious deliberations. The war, in fact, is an eye opener, arousing their ethnic consciousness. Welch exposes the meaninglessness and indifference of the white world—a world full of "crafty," "stalking white men"—through his narrator's emotional frostbite and his absurd experiences in white towns like Harlem, Havre, Dodson and Malta.

① In trying to establish their reality, the reservation of the Indians emerges as a refuge from the white man's world. It becomes a shelter from the misery of war (Abel, Tayo), from city life (Abel, Tayo, the unnamed narrator of Winter in the Blood), in short, a home. We only have to recall the narrator's statement "It was good to be at home" he says and

distinguishes between the dust of the reservation and that of city life. The redemptive return of the protagonists is a pointer to the fact that the Indians can still derive strength from their ethnic heritage. Gerald Hobson sums up the whole issue so aptly as he points out that "the Indians will continue to occupy a principal focus of the American psyche, and will continue to 'return' no matter how many times they 'vanish.'"<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Momaday, Welch and Silko have immensely enriched American literature as a result of their distinct contributions. The three writers have added to the intensity of their art by not only drawing upon their individual experience but also that of their racial experience. Consequently, the ethnicity that manifests itself in their writings adds a new dimension to the existing form of novel, giving the genre a wider definition.<sup>11</sup> Its most significant contribution is the synthesis of the conventional narrative style with the elements of the powerful American Indian oral tradition. Discussing this aspect of the contemporary American Indian writers, Professor Norma Wilson observes: "That Spirit of Place is perhaps the most meaningful basic understanding that can be derived from studying the traditional oral literature of the various Native American cultures and the modern writing that has developed out of that literature."<sup>12</sup> Momaday's prose style, which combines the physicality of detail with the abstraction is a style which, according to Yvor Winters, is "post symbolist."<sup>13</sup>

Although the three novels follow a similar pattern of disillusionment, rejection and return,<sup>14</sup> the stories are distinct from one another. This is largely because of the fact that the three writers belong to different tribes. Although the Indian tribes are bound together by a common fate as a result of their contact and conflict with the white culture, yet they are highly variegated communities, each having a rich, distinguished historical past and a storehouse of wisdom in the form of myths, legends, oral poetry and racial wisdom. This not only gives the writers, and hence their works, a sense of place, pride and dignity, but also adds a new cultural perspective to the study of American literature.

#### Otsedaba

## Chapter I Introduction

1. Nathan A. Scott Jr., "Black Literature," in Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing, ed. Daniel Hoffman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 287.

2. Wayne C. Miller, "Cultural Consciousness in a Multi-Cultural Society: The Uses of Literature," 8, 3 (Fall 1981), p. 30.

3. The term "ethnicity" has been defined variously by sociologists depending on their notion of an ethnic group. In our understanding of the various definitions, an ethnic group is one which manifests cultural traits as a primary defining characteristic. Ethnicity would, therefore, be the manifestation and presence of such cultural traits in a group which give it the basis for its distinct identity or which distinguishes it from another group. An ethnic group, like the Indians, thus, is a self perceived community having a tradition which is not shared by those with whom they are in contact.

For a detailed discussion on ethnicity and ethnic identity, see Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

4. Miller, p. 33.

5. For a detailed analysis of the Melting Pot theory, see Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

6. Carl Wittke, "Melting Pot Literature," College English, 7, 4 (1946), pp. 187-97.

7. Some of the works by these writers are: Trumpets West by Elmer Peterson; Gunnar and Falconberg by Boyesen; Latchstring Out by Skulda Banér and Kølvaag's well-known trilogy Giants in the Earth, Peter Victorious and Their Father's God.

8. Ibid., p. 190.

9. For details see, Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), Ch. 1, 2 and 3.

10. Wittke, p. 192.

11. See Edmund Wilson, "The Historical Interpretation of Literature," in The Intent of the Critic, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith Publishing House, 1963, p. 46.

12. Baldwin's notion of a protest novel suggests "rejection with life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power," and he insists "that it is his [the protagonist's] categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended." See James Baldwin, "Everyone's Protest Novel," Partisan Review, 16 (1949), p. 585.
13. Ibid.
14. John Collier's circular as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Circular No. 2970, Jan. 1934.
15. William E. Coffey, Phoenix: The Rise and Rebirth of Indian People (New York: Von Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979), p. 174.
16. Anthropologist Robin Fox is also of this opinion. See Robin Fox, Encounters with Anthropology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 157.
17. See especially Michael Dorris, "Native American Literature in an Ethnohistorical Context," College English, 41, No. 2 (Oct., 1979), pp. 148-62; Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L.P. Silet, The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); "Foreward" to Literature of the American Indian, abridged, eds. Thomas Sanders and Walter Peek (California: Glencoe Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), pp. xiii-xiv.
18. See especially Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 71-204.
19. Robert L. Berner, rev. of "Fig John Tree: An Indian in Fact and Fiction," by Peter G. Beidler, American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 3, 3 (1979), pp. 86-87.
20. Dorris, p. 153.
21. Mick McAllister, "The Color of Meat, The Color of Bone," Denver Quarterly, 14, 4 (1979), p. 10.
22. See Vine Deloria Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1969) for a scathing attack on the white anthropologists. See also Leslie Silko, "An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts," Shantih, 4, 2 (Summer-Fall, 1979), pp. 3-5.
23. David B. Espey, "Endings in Contemporary American Indian Fiction," Western American Literature, 13 (Aug., 1978), p. 134.
24. Coffey, p. 128.
25. Coffey, "Introduction," p. iii.



26. Glazer and Moynihan, "Introduction," p. 3.
27. See Daniel Hoffman, ed. "Introduction," Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. Hoffman has a chapter each on the Black and the Jewish writers, and makes a passing reference to Native American writing.
28. It may be relevant here to point out that in our thesis we have used the terms American Indian/Native American literature interchangeably. Similarly, the terms "Indian," "natives" and "Native Americans" have been used in the same manner.
29. Dorris, p. 153.
30. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Mythopoeic Vision in Native American Literature," American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 1, 1 (1974), p. 5.
31. John Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).
32. Allen, p. 7.
33. Refer Berkhofer, pp. 33-61 and Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Humanities Press, 1958).
34. The American core-culture that has been referred to in our thesis is essentially—White, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class Americans. Although the core-culture is Protestant in nature, (and hence the popular term W.A.S.P.) the religious life of the Indian's in the novel is in contact with Catholicism. However, the values of the whites with whom the Indian characters interact are "essentially western liberal-bourgeois and committed to the concept of 'work ethic' and the will to material achievement," to quote Professor Dorman. See James Dorman, "Ethnicity in Contemporary America," Journal of American Studies, 15, 3 (Dec., 1981), pp. 325-39.
35. For a detailed discussion on the Melting Pot theory, see Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
36. This process is to some extent similar to that of "Sanskritization" in India, where members belonging to the lower castes adopt certain value systems, practices and beliefs of the higher caste (the Brahmins) in order to achieve a social status. For details see M.N. Srinivas, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization," in Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, London, Asia Publishing House, 1962.
37. Charles Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978).

38. Notice Larson's agreement with Baldwin's notion of a "protest novel." In other words, Indian fiction would fall in the same category if the term were applied to it. However, as we have shown, this is not really the case.

39. Ibid., p. 165.

40. Jim Ruppert, "Story Telling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko," The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 9, 1 (1981), p. 54.

41. Ruppert, p. 56.

42. Dr. Paula Allen, in a personal communication, gave information regarding a forthcoming book, Studies in American Literature, to be published by MLA. However, due to its non-availability, it has not been possible to include it as a part of our study.

43. Abraham, Chapman, ed. Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretation. A Gathering of Indian Memories, Symbolic Contexts and Literary Criticism (New York: New American Library), 1975.

## Chapter 2 Old Home of the Spirit: Momaday's House Made of Dawn

1. Vine Deloria Jr., Identity and Culture, Daedalus, 110, 2 (Spring, 1981), p. 13.

2. N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Harper and Row, 1968, Paperback ed., New York: Perennial Library, Harper and Row, 1977). All quotations are from the Signet edition and will appear in the text.

3. Lawrence J. Evers, "Words and Place: a Reading of House Made of Dawn," Western American Literature, 11 (1977), p. 298.

4. D.H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (London: Mercury Books, 1965), pp. 1-8.

5. Momaday, "An American Land Ethic," Sierra Club Bulletin, 55 (Feb., 1970), p. 11.

6. Barbara Strelke, "N. Scott Momaday: Racial Memory and Individual Imagination," in Abraham Chapman, ed. Literature of the American Indians, p. 349.

7. See Evers, p. 302. See also, Roger Dickinson-Brown, "The Art and Importance of N. Scott Momaday," The Southern Review, 14, 1 (Jan., 1978), pp. 30-45. He writes, "Momaday once indicated to me in conversation that he was unaware of a connection between the albinos and there is

after all nothing in the novel to establish a connection," p. 32.

8. Joseph F. Trimmer, "Native American and the American Mix: N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn," Indian Social Studies Quarterly, 28 (Autumn, 1975), p. 80.

9. Ibid., p. 83

10. N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (New York: Ballantine, 1970), p. 2.

11. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," in Abraham Chapman, Literature of the American Indians (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 113.

12. Strelke, p. 350.

13. Martha Scott Trimble, N. Scott Momaday (Boise, Idaho: BSC Western Writers Series, 1973), p. 22.

14. Jack Page, "Inside the Hopi Homeland," National Geographic Magazine, Nov., 1982, p. 629.

15. Robin Fox, Encounters with Anthropology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Book Ltd., 1975), p. 157.

16. Ibid., p. 158.

17. Trimmer, p. 83.

18. Fox, p. 160.

19. William Coffey, Phoenix, p. 112. He writes: "The basic provisions of the Dawes Act was to divide the reservation land acquired by the tribes by treaty into small, individually owned tracts. These would be allotted to the several members of the tribe with a twenty-five year restriction on the owner's selling the land." Further, "the Act gave the president authority to purchase the surplus land and the proceeds accruing from such sale were to be used to further the education and civilization of the tribes," p. 112.

20. Ibid., p. 128.

21. Refer footnote 10. See also Momaday, The Names (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 170 where he explains the meaning of various Indian names including his own.

22. Hazel W. Hertzberg, The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), pp. 14 and 27.

23. Vernon E. Lattin, "The Quest for Mythic Vision in Contemporary Native American and Chicano Fiction," American Literature, 50 (1979), p. 634.

24. Paula Gunn Allen, "A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian Prose and Poetry," MELUS, 7, 2 (Summer, 1980), p. 9.

25. Trimmer, p. 90.

26. A parallel to this scene is presented by Silko in Ceremony, where Tayo's spiritual regeneration takes place after he makes love to the Night Swan. It is discussed in detail in Chapter IV of the thesis.

27. Trimmer, p. 82, and footnote 16, p. 90.

28. Evers, p. 310.

29. Ibid., p. 308.

30. Trimmer, p. 82.

31. Evers, pp. 309-10.

32. Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Modern Man," The Modern Theatre (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 1248.

33. Linda Hogan, "Who Puts Together," Denver Quarterly, 14, 4 (Winter, 1980), pp. 107-08.

34. Ibid., p. 108.

35. Momaday, "What Will Happen to the Land?" Viva, July 30, 1972, p. 2.

36. Quoted in Hogan, p. 108. For a fuller discussion on burial rites refer Elsie Parsons.

37. Elsie Parsons, ed. American Indian Life (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

38. Kenneth Rosen, ed. "The Man to Send Rain Clouds": Contemporary Stories by American Indians (New York: Viking, 1974).

39. Edith Blicksilver, "Traditionalism Vs. Modernity: Leslie Silko on American Indian Women," Southwest Review, 69, 2 (Spring, 1979), p. 155.

40. A catalyst does not take part in a chemical reaction, yet it accelerates the process. It is in this sense that Christianity appears to be functioning in the midst of religious life of the Indians.

41. Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1978), p. 91.

42. Carole Olesan, "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's House Made of Dawn," South Dakota Review, 11 (1973). Harold S. McAllister, "Incarnate Grace and the Paths of Salvation in House Made of Dawn," South Dakota Review, 12 (1974-75).

43. Marion Willarad Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen: Momaday's House Made of Dawn," Critique, 14, 2 (1972), p. 69.

44. Lattin, p. 637. See also Valerie Andrews observation in "The Psychic Powers of Running," in "The New Snobbery," The Atlantic (Jan., 1981). According to her, "while we activate the archetypes of primal running man and the information code for genetic and evolutionary past as we run, at the same time we reach a transcendental state that may enable us to connect with other forms of consciousness flowing through the universe at large." p. 42.

45. Lattin, Ibid.

46. See for details, John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, "The Circle and the Square" in Literature of the American Indians. He writes: "To our way of thinking the Indians' symbol is the circle, the hoop. Nature wants things to be round. The bodies of human beings and animals have no corners. . . . The nation was only a part of the universe, in itself circular and made of the earth, which is round, of the sun, which is round, of the stars, which are round. The moon, the horizon, the rainbow—circles within circles within circles, with no beginning and no end," (p. 81).

47. S. Krishnamoorthy Aithal, "The Redemptive Return: Momaday's House Made of Dawn," unpublished paper.

48. Larson, p. 82.

49. Lattin, p. 639.

50. Hogan, p. 112.

### Chapter III      From Loneliness to a Wedding Ring: Welch's Winter in the Blood

1. James Welch, Winter in the Blood (New York: Bantam Books, 1975). All page references will appear in the text.

2. This is suggested by William W. Thackeray in "'Crying for Pity' in Winter in the Blood," 7, 1 (1981), p. 61.

3. Alan R. Velie, ed. American Indian Literature (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), pp. 315-16.

4. Ibid., p. 316.

5. John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, "The Circle and the Square," Literature of the American Indian, p. 85.

6. Elaine Jahner, "Quick Paces and a Space of Mind," Denver Quarterly, 14, 4 (Winter, 1980), pp. 42-47.

7. Don Kunz, "Lost in the Distances of Winter: James Welch's Winter in the Blood," Critique, 20, 1 (Aug., 1978), p. 95.

8. It is interesting to notice that it is the narrator, who sensitive enough to feel the distance, perceives the barrenness and absence of beauty in the land. But Lame Bull often refers to the countryside and land as "rich" and "beautiful." See also William Smith Jr., "Winter in the Blood: Indian Cowboy as Everyman," Michigan Academician, 10, 3 (Winter, 1978).

9. Paul Pavich, rev. of Ray Young Bear, Winter of the Salmandar, Western American Literature, 16 (Feb., 1982), p. 330.

10. Kunz, p. 94.

11. N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 83.

12. Geri Rhodes, "Winter in the Blood," A: a Journal of Contemporary Literature, 4, 2 (Fall, 1979). See her footnote 1, p. 17.

13. Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 147.

14. Ibid.

15. That he identifies himself with Amos is obvious from the dream (which is discussed on p. 118) where he sees Amos, with a crooked knee, waddling out of Teresa's thighs.

16. Larson, p. 142.

17. Incidentally, the original title of Welch's novel was The Only Good Indian. See James Welch, "'The Only Good Indian,' Section I of a Novel in Progress," South Dakota Review, 9 (Summer, 1971), p. 54.

18. See Thackeray's article in which he points out that the narrator seems to rely on his animal allies.

19. See Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian (New York, Vintage Books, 1979), p. 40.

20. Even his conversation and involvement with the mysterious airplane man smack of similar disinterestedness. He seems to be participating in them without being involved. His conversations with the Horn family are also of a similar nature.

21. The images used by the narrator, linking the black hands of his grandmother with a magpie's feet, combine to reinforce the image of a Blackfeet Indian.

22. See also his description of Teresa (p. 39). It is interesting to notice the similarity he sees between Agnes and Teresa. For example, the "warmth" he had noticed in Agnes' eyes is also present in Teresa's eyes (p. 39). He appears to be strangely drawn towards her in spite of his apparent indifference towards her, reminiscent again of his relationship with Agnes. Thus, in a sense, the images of the barmaid (refer the dream), Agnes and Teresa are superimposed in his subconscious.

23. Smith, p. 302. His emphasis is on the "mystery," rather than "ethnicity" in the novel.

24. Geri Rhodes, "Winter in the Blood," A: a Journal of Contemporary Literature, 4, 2 (Fall, 1979), pp. 10-17.

25. Larson, pp. 140-49.

26. Jahner, p. 43.

27. See Smith, pp. 305-06.

28. Rhodes, p. 16.

29. "Generalized, moralistic mush," is how Arthur Miller termed the American Society. See Arthur Miller, "Arthur Miller Stirs the Melting Pot that Didn't Melt," U.S. News & World Report (Nov. 12, 1974), pp. 60-61.

30. "Apple" Indian is a pejorative term used for acculturated Indians. Like an apple such Indians are red from outside but white within their hearts. See nila north-sun's poem on shadow in "the Way and the Way Things are," Diet Pepsi and Nacho Cheese (Fallon: Duck Down Press, 1977), p. 13.

31. "The Only Good Indian," *ibid.*, p. 54.

Chapter IV    A Place More Ancient Than Eden: Silko's Ceremony

1. Shirley A. Star, Robin M. Williams and Samuel A. Stauffer, The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 486-87.
2. Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (New York: New American Library, Signet Book, 1978), pp. 43-44. Subsequent quotations will appear in the text in parenthesis.
3. James Welch, Winter in the Blood (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), p. 190.
4. Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). By structural assimilation Gordon refers to the large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs and institutions of host society on primary group level, and states that once structural assimilation takes place (either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation), all of the other forms of assimilation automatically follow. Structural assimilation, then, rather than acculturation, appears to be the basis of assimilation.
5. Israel Zangwill, The Melting Pot: Drama in Four Acts (New York: Macmillan, 1909), p. 37.
6. J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (New York: Fox Duffield, 1904), p. 50.
7. N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Row, 1977), p. 57.
8. Maria Leach, Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1949), p. 210.
9. There are two instances in the novel where Tayo is shown urinating (pp. 47 & 200). Urine represents life force and is used in sympathetic magic to produce fertilizing rains. This appears significant in Tayo's context, since his curse has caused drought in the land. He sees his urine as "clear water." See also Winter in the Blood where the novel begins with the narrator urinating in the borrow pit (p. 3).
10. Statement of the Board of Managers of the United Foreign Missionary Society, May 5, 1923, quoted by Berkhofer, in The White Man's Indian (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 151.
11. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," in ed. Abraham Chapman's Literature of the American Indians (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 115.



12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. For an indepth understanding of this idea, see Peter Winch, ed. The Idea of a Social Science (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).
15. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of Ceremony," American Indian Quarterly, 5, 1 (1979), p. 7.
16. Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Perennial Books, Harper & Row, 1977), p. 71.
17. Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," in ed. Abraham Chapman, Literature of the American Indian, p. 101.
18. Elizabeth Schultz, "African and the Afro-American Roots in Contemporary Afro-American Literature: the Difficult Search for Family Origin," Studies in American Fiction, 8, 2 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 127-45.
19. Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," pp. 119-20.
20. Ibid., p. 117.
21. In a review of Ceremony in the Harper's (June, 1977), Hayden Carruth offers a fascinating insight: "Did Leslie Marmon Silko have the word tao when she named the protagonist of a first novel? . . . who is much in need of finding the "Way," p. 80.
22. Paula Gunn Allen, "The Psychological Landscape of Ceremony," American Indian Quarterly, 5 (1979), p. 12.

## Chapter V Conclusion

1. Quoted in Lynn H. Parsons, "'A Perpetual Harrow upon My Feelings': John Quincy Adams and the American Indian," The New England Quarterly, 46 (Sept., 1973), p. 343.
2. Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 55. For a detailed discussion on the scientific image of the Indian, see pp. 33-67.
3. Also see, "Introduction" in Abraham Chapman's Literature of the American Indian, SPI-24 and Berkhofer, pp. 33-69.
4. Quoted in Berkhofer, pp. 123-24.

5. Vine Deloria Jr., "Identity and Culture," Daedalus, 110, 2 (Spring, 1981), p. 17.

6. Ibid., p. 25.

7. Ibid., p. 26.

8. See James H. Dorman, "Ethnicity in Contemporary America," Journal of American Studies, 15, 3 (Dec., 1981), p. 327. This quotation originally appears in an earlier article by Dorman. For reference see his footnote No. 5 in the above article.

9. Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p. 10.

10. Gerald Hobson, "Round Dance—Native American Writing at the University of New Mexico," New America, 2, 3 (Summer-Fall, 1976), p. 6.

11. Many critics have discussed at length the new and distinct features of the American Indian novels. See especially Ceremony, Special Issue of American Indian Quarterly, 5, 1 (1979); Elaine Jahner, "An Act of Attention: Event Structure in Ceremony," pp. 37-46; Robert C. Bell, "Circular Design in Ceremony," pp. 47-62; Kathleen M. Sands and A. Lavonne Ruoff, eds. "A Discussion of Ceremony," pp. 63-70; Larry Evers, "A Response: Going Along with the Story," pp. 71-75.

Also see Roger Dickinson Brown, "The Art and Importance of N. Scott Momaday," The Southern Review, 14, 1 (Jan., 1978), pp. 30-45; Norma Wilson, "Outlook for Survival," Denver Quarterly, 14, 4 (Winter, 1980), pp. 22-30; William Smith Jr., "Winter in the Blood: The Indian Cowboy as Everyman," Michigan Academician, 10, 3 (Winter, 1978), pp. 299-306; Gerald Haslam, "The Light that Fills the World: Native American Literature," South Dakota Review, 11, 1 (Spring, 1973), pp. 27-41; Mark Porter, "Mysticism of the Land and the Western Novel," South Dakota Review, 11, 1 (Spring 1973), pp. 79-91; and Jim Ruppert, "Story Telling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko," The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 9, 1 (1981), pp. 53-57.

12. Wilson, p. 23.

13. Dickinson Brown, pp. 33-34.

14. See Peter G. Beidler, "Animal and Human Development in the Contemporary American Indian Novel," Western American Literature, 14 (Aug., 1979), pp. 133-48. Beidler very succinctly sums up the plot outline of the three novels like this:

After having been away from his reservation home, the young Indian hero returns dislocated, alienated, inarticulate, suicidal. He feels rotten about himself, his joblessness.

and his family—particularly his dead brother. In attempting to find a place for himself he drifts far from home to bar to women to old Indians who have never been separated from their native culture. Finally, by recognizing meaningful analogies between himself and the animals around him, and by putting his life in touch with their lives, the young Indian grows triumphs and finds his proper place in the modern world. p. 133.

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